

spare Rib

Women's magazine
No. 17. 20p

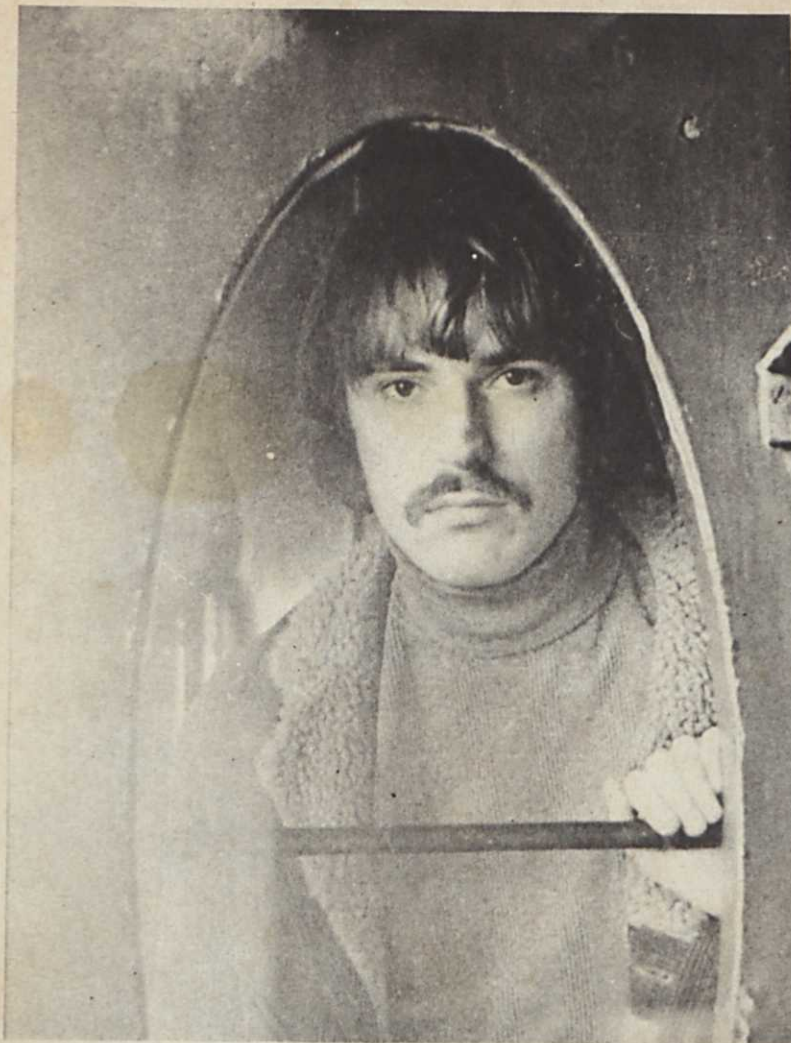
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IN OUR OWN WRITE

Dear Spare Rib,

I generally read your magazine cover to cover, so I was very interested in your piece on Guru Maharaj Ji and his ex-feminist devotee, as I am also a devotee.

I'll try and explain the way in which Maharaj Ji is bringing about the equality of the sexes. Our society is really based on ego, either forming one or finding your real one. This lets both sexes in for a difficult time, in either conforming to the ideal, finding a substitute, or finding people which you personally get on with. What we are really looking for is our true identity, something which is natural to be 24 hours a day.

Unfortunately, man is not born a complete identity, a harmonious whole, so there is much clashing of egos whether within each sex group, or between the sex groups. To illustrate a point we are born with two ingredients, a body and its desires, and a mind and its desires. A two-way communication system which must turn and turn again. Maharaj Ji shows the third part of our identities, which creates a triangle of harmony and interaction; this third part makes us whole. This part is experience of energy, the life force by which the ego and body exist. This energy is the same, whether in me, you, or any male. It is the lowest common denominator of being. It is only by knowing this constant experience are we truly equal. After all, one mind is more intelligent than another, as one ego is more appealing than another whatever sex. Those two can never be made equal whatever the body is.

As for all the main figureheads being male, you seem to have forgotten Mata Ji, who is very much in control of the situation I assure you.

Jai Sat Chit fuan
(love),
Judith Greenberg,
Inner Park Road,
London SW19

Dear Spare Rib,

I'm getting more and more pissed off with the way various magazines pressurise really young girls (aged 11 years upwards) into becoming nothing more than pretty little parcels ready to be unwrapped by the first guy that comes along.

Girls are forced to grow up so much that it takes a pretty discerning little girl to get away from it all, and be herself before tragedy comes along.

Witness my own experiences. Three attempted suicides and one miscarriage, all before the age of 16. I'm 17 now, and as I'm more mature than I was, only now can I see the damage that the magazines, which coax girls to adopt this premature maturity, cause.

I can see now that if I hadn't been made to 'grow up' as fast as I was by the various sexist mags I read then I would never have made the mistakes I did. I try very hard to let other, younger girls know of my experiences and learn from them. But I only get sniggers or looks of disbelief, which is really sad and hurtful.

But what can you or I do about it? The media's voice is so much more appealing than ours or so it would seem. Do we just wait and see what happens and let tragedy fall into the laps of very young, unaware girls? I hope not.

Lots of love and best wishes,
Sara,
Tilehouse Lane,
Denham, Bucks.

Dear Spare Rib,

I am writing to tell you about a waitressing job I had in Richmond. It was at a small, expensive Pizza Restaurant by the river. The actual job wasn't too bad, especially moneywise; that is, if you don't take into account the racism, sexism and exploitation I suffered. Every time I set foot inside the place I was bombarded with questions and insulting wisecracks about my sex life: I was continually asked how many boyfriends I had, what they were like in bed, and other equally humiliating questions. I was told to modify my dress (tighter and shorter, basically) to 'entice the customers', and I was threatened with the sack if I didn't do this.

It seemed that the more I tried to humour them, the more insults and physical passes I received.

I would like to make it clear that this letter is not merely an outlet for my own emotions, but is an example of the demoralising and humiliating way in which women are treated in their working environment.

If this letter is published, I would be grateful if you would not disclose my name

and address for obvious reasons.

Yours in Sisterhood,
Cathy

Dear Spare Rib,

The August issue with Spare Parts on kites by Stephanie Gilbert reached me today just as I had finished making a Bermuda kite.

The article was good and precise but could have explained a lot more. For instance, the principle of kite flying is that there must be a space for the air to flow away to. This is contrived in a flat kite by the angle at which it flies, determined by that relationship of strength and direction of wind to tail weight (or tail resistance quality). In a box kite the space is inherent in the design, so the box kite is usually a steadier flier, it doesn't need such a steady wind. You get the idea if you think of a plate falling into a swimming pool. It falls from side to side unless it has a good hole in it, when it will fall straight.

Then there is all the psychology of kite flying. 'Fishing upside down' 'I missed my sail boat so much I made kites.' It is certainly my own personal escape mechanism from boredom, especially from boredom by men. I think I made my first kite on honeymoon with a gouty husband in the 1930's.

Yours with sisterhood,
Emily Liddell,
Point Shares,
Bermuda

continued ▶

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Dear Spare Rib,

I notice that in the August Spare Rib you refer to the 'illegitimate birth-rate'. This designation is a pernicious, socially divisive factor in our society. Illegitimate people are deeply offended by its association with sinful sex and they bitterly resent the suffering that their mothers had to undergo to bring them up. We consider that the term 'illegitimate' should no longer be used, and that all children should have equal status in law and in practice, the fact of their birth being sufficient.

As far as we can ascertain, the idea of legitimacy arose in Roman Law by 'decree' of successive Emperors, so that the male patriarch in each family could protect his wealth and property by conditioning his wife to reject all sexual advances except his own. From this we get the idea of bourgeois marriage which was later sanctified by the church. More people than ever before are getting married (and unmarried). The stigma of illegitimacy still lives it seems. When are we going to banish this spectre from our midst? While women are still sold on the idea of legal marriage, the distinction will still continue in people's minds, I suppose.

Yours sincerely,
Shirley Frost,
Mothers In Action,
Poland Street,
London

Dear Spare Rib,

I just realised that condoms and Women's Lib go hand in hand. Am I a late starter or just too unhip for words? For me, Durex were around when I was fifteen and sixteen and then suddenly birth control became my responsibility and my expense. I should think I have been on most brands of the pill, all of which made me unbelievably exhausted, so I went on to the cap. I was first fixed up with the wrong size one, yes! If the cap fits . . . I went through agonies both physical and mental over this. The cap isn't too bad if you've got a regular old man who can maybe give you a hand with it, certainly have a laugh with you over it, but it's hair-raising if the man is more of a casual affair. You either get the thing in too early which is shameful and humiliating, goodness yes, or you have to break away and get to the bathroom quick, nude with handbag. I never felt I wanted to talk to any casual man about it so nursed my fears and phobias to myself.

I know ladies who can't take the pill because of one problem or another, can't wear the coil because it either keeps dropping out or because their periods are beyond the help of even two sanitary towels including VAT, or ladies like myself who cannot be both organised and relaxed about the cap. You put it in just in case and he goes straight off to sleep and you almost want to seduce him out of spite. Or he wakes you up in the middle of the night and you've got to start fiddling about with rubber and cream.

O.K., so why do we put up with it? I asked around, "Well of course he won't use

anything", "He doesn't like to have to stop", "They make him feel dry", "He hates the bit afterwards", "He says he's never used them yet and he's not going to start now".

It's blackmail! We're the ones who have the babies so they say it's up to us to make sure we don't have them if we don't want them. Oh the anguish and the decisions involved just to save him from a dry feeling!

Well let's unite then and tell them, "Honey, if you want to fuck me you just get down to the barber's shop. I am not going to queue up for hours to see a doctor, make myself open to any old experiment, have to buy a new pair of jeans after every period, go through yet another plastic finger routine just for the pleasure of your body. You want the pleasure of my body? Put yourself out".

Love,
J.S. Pinner,
London

Dear Spare Rib,

I feel I must protest against the offensive and superior tone of most of your male correspondents. They address women in general in such a way; 'My dear liberated slaves, you really must remember that we men have our little problems too'.

As if their audience is a Victorian Ladies Institute and they are the esteemed guest speakers. Such a male attitude

alienates the more male-dominated women from the movement and destroys the unity of women, the dignity and importance of the concept of Women's Liberation M or perhaps that's their intention.

Yours sincerely,
Miriam Stockill,
Sunbury Gardens,
London NW7

Dear Spare Rib,

Reading your magazine for the first time has increased my enthusiasm for the Women's Liberation Movement. Your attitudes are helping me solve a personal problem M lover versus career. Do I follow my lover or take my own road. The two are mutually exclusive, either I follow him or he follows me, and in the latter case the liberation of the woman is at the expense of the man.

I think that Women's Liberation is often in danger of merely reversing roles rather than eradicating them. For instance, a letter in the August issue describes a relationship between a man and a woman where the woman owns the house they live in. This obviously means that she is in a dominant position when Women's Liberation should surely be aiming at the eradication of all sexist domination.

Love,
Judy Englander,
Bowland College,
Bailrigg, Lancaster.

spare Rib

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Spare Parts No Spare Parts this month as Stephanie Gilbert has appendicitis

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**Dartmouth Park Hill
community
child centre**

**Cover photograph
by Angela Phillips**

ANNA
RAEBURN

The banner headline "Sex" has only appeared once over this column but it has already drawn a strange response. A letter arrived from a man who professed himself a "slave" to women. He is interested in dominance, the woman "disciplining" him although he also says that he can derive "deep spiritual satisfaction from merely being in the presence of a female." Thus, he continues, he has become a strong supporter of Women's Lib - although he's not pleased at the idea of women throwing away their bras. For him, anything that makes a woman look like a woman is so much to the good. Which seems to bring us back to where we came in. We're supposed to look as he thinks we should look, not as we do look. And isn't it interesting that Spare Rib should receive a letter which normally would have gone to one of the more specific of the sex market publications? I showed the letter to one of the editorial staff who commented that she found it insulting. I can't agree except in the sense that men insult women and women men in all areas of interaction and particularly sexual interaction with monotonous regularity. I think it's a sad letter, lonely and desperate. If you've got to the stage where your life is missing what you need to the extent that you'd try even the most unlikely source of information and help for it, I can't feel angry only grieved that we are a product of a society which programmes us into sexual deformity and then demands that we don't tell anybody about it and more or less ignore the pain it gives us. Dear Mr. Humblest Obedience, we can do nothing for you and you can do nothing for us. We see your problem, but are repelled by it - perhaps because inherited memory tells us that you're more in our boat than we like to admit.

Other letters have asked for the names and addresses of sex therapists. In all cases, I shall be writing to the correspondents to find out a bit more about what the problems are and how they can best be dealt with. I would like to kill the term "sex therapists" though. All the therapists I know of could quite easily and properly function without concentrating on sex. In fact, to be perfectly honest, they don't. It's the public who now define their difficulties as sexual. If that's how the patient sees his problem, then that's how the therapist has to work with it. But to call the consultants "sex therapists" seems to define within rigid limits

problems which incorporate social training, emotionality, psychology and individual personalities. It also makes them sound like a bunch of hacks. Could we not follow the very good definition given me by an American counsellor who calls herself a social therapist and defines this therapy this way: "It's to teach you to deal with all the people who influence you, inside and outside your own head."

Dear Spare Rib,

My problem is not really a problem anymore, but I would like to add my voice to your column.

For 20 years I was unable to enjoy intercourse or to attain orgasm with my husband. I went to the doctor who advised me to be treated psycho-therapeutically. The psychiatrist I saw told me that the physical side of my problem could be dealt with by a Harley Street specialist through the use of vaginal dilators. After 10 years of treatment and much expense and frustration, I just happened to mention my problem one evening to my neighbour. To my surprise I found that she had similar problems. We began to realise that, in fact, there was nothing the matter with us and started questioning why male sexuality had taken over our lives to the extent of eliminating our pleasure. We also wondered, for example, why it sounds ludicrous to talk of shrinking penises when it sounds quite acceptable for women to have to change the shape of their genitalia to accommodate male physiology. Why it was that what we enjoyed is called merely pre-play and is certainly secondary to what is surely ironically called intercourse.

As I said in the beginning of my letter, my - or rather our - problem (we haven't looked back since) is not one anymore. We have joined the sisters all over the world in making a stand for our own autonomous sexuality.

Could you consider giving up male-oriented answers to the anxieties of our sisters in oppression and publish this letter.

Yours,

Ammy Hewett.

I am 21 and my boyfriend is 19. We have been going out together for six months and we began sexual relations quite early in the relationship.

I am sexually inhibited partly because I think I am too fat and partly because I am apprehensive, fearing that I do not stimulate my boyfriend. He has said that he sometimes wonders if I've got any idea at all. Of course I was very upset. I do the same things with him as I do with any boyfriend and it always worked before but not with him. I really feel clumsy and inadequate.

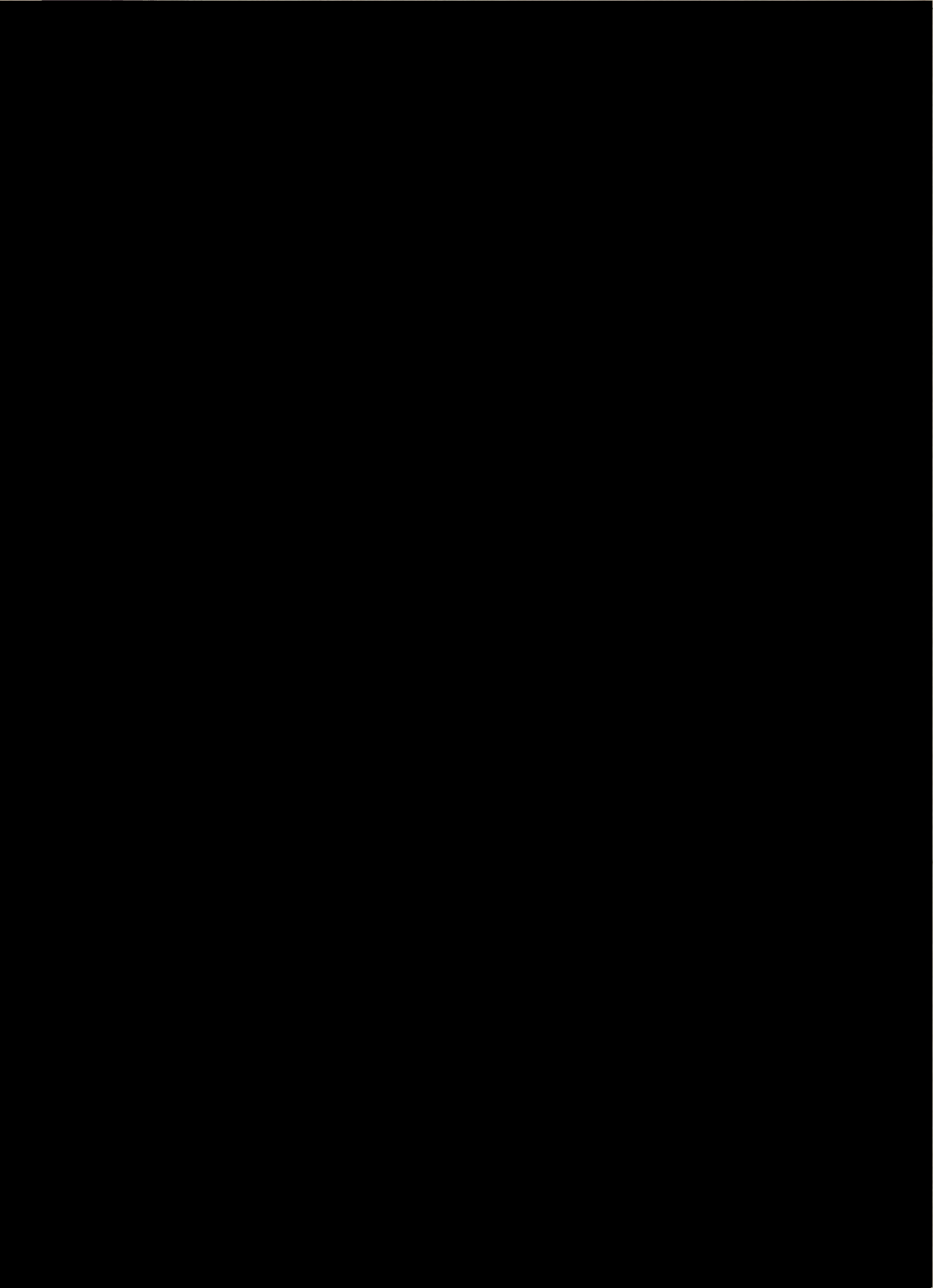
You sound a bit insecure about yourself generally and being told you're inexperienced when you're at your most vulnerable doesn't help. First, the weight. Take a long cool look in the mirror. If you really feel uncomfortable inside your skin, then diet sensibly. If that's just another of your boyfriend's gems, forget it. Secondly, I think you should try to make some more friends of both sexes and not rely entirely on this man of yours. It would be much more positive if he were to show you

how you could excite him instead of complaining that you don't. Try sitting quietly and working out what would be pleasurable for him to do to you and then turn the tables and try it on him. I don't like saying, go off and read this book or that because that just makes you feel that the answer to it all is in a book. It's in your makeup, the ability to give and receive pleasure, and if you're brave enough to try it out with someone whose sexual aims aren't entirely selfish, you'll find out whatever it is that makes things good.

Why do men change so drastically when they get married? We've been married for three years with a two year old son and another baby shortly due. My husband has become addicted to the telly, he's not even affectionate any more. Ever since the day we married he's been too tired for sex in bed or else it's just over quickly so that he can get back to his beloved goggle-box. We don't have sex anywhere else now "because we're married." His attitude really turns me off. I've had a lot of trouble with vaginal thrush because of the pregnancies and I've had it when I went on the Pill. It makes me so sore and if I get upset, he just turns away. He doesn't seem to realise the urge is still there even if I am still sore.

Your husband sounds like one of those men who was brought up to get married and having done so, he feels terribly disappointed with the whole situation. You've probably had the children too quickly and he sees his life stretching before him, worrying about money, trapped in a house full of baby paraphernalia with an embarrassingly enthusiastic wife. He probably didn't consider the likelihood of the latter. You'll have to tell him in words of one syllable that you cannot continue like this and try and find out what he really does think and feel about the situation. Based on that, you can try and build your lives together up again. Point out to him that to continue like this will drive you into the arms of someone else and if you're going to the trouble of writing to a magazine for help, then you obviously care about things and want them to work out. With regard to vaginal thrush, from which some women undoubtedly suffer more than others, you've got it because of the bodily dilation which goes on while you're pregnant right now but the Pill is not going to be helpful if you're a sufferer because the Pill simulates pregnancy. The FPA would be able to fit you with an IUD for which you're an excellent candidate.

The drugs usually used to combat monillia, candida or thrush (all of which are essentially the same) build up resistance so it takes longer and longer for them to work each time. You must also bear in mind that the likelihood of becoming reinfected may have to do with your not letting it clear properly before you recommence sexual activity. The sort of situation in which you find yourself calls for you to be very strong minded and clear about what you want for the future. You must take a stand and try to air both sides of the question, yours and your husband's, and be prepared to be shaken and shocked. Take a deep breath and go ahead as calmly and maturely as possible.



BUSKING DOWN TO A FINE ART

*Jane Ennis discovers how you can still
sing for your supper.*

The young policeman was aware that he looked slightly foolish talking to a sack, but he put on a bold front.

"You'll be in real trouble if I catch you here again," he said.

The sack made a few angry grunts while his friends retrieved their hats from the crowd and started to pack up their gear. The crowd moved away sluggishly. After all, most of them had paid to see the bound and chained man in the sack break free of his bonds and they resented being moved on before the show started.

Having satisfied himself that the buskers were really going and that the crowd had dispersed, the policeman said something into his walky-talky and moved away along London's Portobello Road to deal with the next group of street entertainers.

Portobello Road on a Saturday is something of a Forth Bridge operation for the police. No sooner have they traversed its length clearing away the singers, dancers, fire eaters and escapologists than a new lot have set up in their place and they have to begin the operation all over again. Most buskers accept police interruptions as an occupational hazard. Technically, unless they are caught singing an "obscene" or "profane" song, the only charge

the police can book them on is obstruction. According to "Stones' Justice's Manual":

"If a person without lawful authority, or excuse, in anyway wilfully obstructs the free passage along a highway, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable in respect thereof to a fine not exceeding £50."

The trouble with the obstruction law is that it puts a lot of power into the hands of the individual policeman as he has no need to call witnesses to prove the obstruction. In fact, he can book someone even if they don't cause an obstruction if he judges that they might cause one sometime in the future!

Portobello Road

In Portobello Road, buskers are normally warned and sent packing by a policeman on the first occasion, but if they are caught a second time, they are usually charged with obstruction and fined £5 by the local Magistrates' Court.

With all this harassment, and the money trickling in in 2p pieces, busking would seem to be a very bothersome way of earning a living. But in actual fact, it has some surprising compensations and is threatening to become a somewhat overcrowded field.

Alisha Suffit (27) has been entertaining in



photographs by David Levin



Portobello Road for three years. On a Saturday, she's a familiar sight to stall holders as she trundles her guitar-on-wheels along the street looking for a likely pitch. She's so good that listeners feel obliged to applaud her at the end of her tunes - even if they don't always feel obliged to part with any money. A very able guitarist with a voice to rival Judy Collins, she says that her Saturday appearances provide her with enough money to live in a very humble style. This living is supplemented with money from club and college bookings and occasional radio performances. But with the B.B.C.'s "Sounds of the 70s" only paying her £15 for a session, she can't afford to give up busking.

Alisha has worked as a teacher, but prefers to busk for a living. She realizes that, as a woman, she is in the minority, but doesn't think that this does her any harm. (In fact, it may do her some good. Her Court fines at £2 a time seem to be lower than those imposed on male buskers.)

Alisha, who prefers to sing her own compositions, likes to busk on her own, but sometimes wonders if she would do better with a "bottler" - someone to pass round the hat.

"I usually pass round my own hat at the end of a song. You'd be surprised how it clears away the crowds. Some people are very mean."

But it's not the meanness she minds as much as the rudeness.

"American tourists are a bit much sometimes. Especially the ones with cameras who tell me where to stand and ask me to look up in the middle of a song. I get quite angry with them."

With the winter coming on, Alisha hopes to get more bookings in clubs and colleges:

"Print my address - 10 Thornhill Square, Barnsbury N.1. Perhaps the readers will come up with something."

Playing the Irish Races

Buskers John Mulheren, Paedar Howley and William McQuail are better known in Ireland than England. For years they've been travelling round the Irish race courses playing for money, Guinness and anything else that was offered to them.

"A few weeks ago, a girl gave us this huge cake stuffed with dates. Delicious it was."

When they first came over to England, they tried busking at Ascot.

"It was a washout. Not the same as the Irish races. All we got were dirty looks."

The boys work just hard enough to keep themselves - and harder when they're saving for something special. Recently, they were busking around London at all the well known pitches trying to get the fare together for a trip back to Ireland to attend a big music

festival.

Their music is traditionally Irish. Particularly attractive to the London ear are the fast jigs that Paedar plays on his whistle. Sometimes they get offered bookings in folk clubs, but they're not all that interested as a rule because it usually involves making arrangements for weeks in advance.

"We like to take each day as it comes."

American violinist Tom Solinger and Anglo-Indian guitarist Robin Ross met in Istanbul and decided to team up for busking when they got to London. Now they can be seen regularly down Portobello Road. £20 is their take on a good day. The collecting is done for them by Kim Dyson, an American, who passes among the crowd with a hat and her remarkably well behaved baby strapped to her chest.

Their music is so infectious that they attract every stray guitarist for miles around until they end up by having their own backing group. Says Kim:

"The first time it happened, we split the money between everyone, but now we just say we don't mind you joining in, but we're keeping the money."

While the crowded London streets may be a busker's paradise during the Summer, in the Winter its the grim buskers in the London subways who do best. "The best pitches in London" is how these troglodite musicians describe the draughty tunnels. For not only do they ensure a steady stream of possible donors passing by regularly, they act as a microphone and echo chamber for the music, offer a certain amount of protection from the police and provide the shelter to make busking a feasible way of earning a living all year round. In fact, so lucrative are these pitches that the best of them are jealously guarded.

Subway organisation on the best pitch

Pete Oden, one of five buskers who work a prize pitch in Tottenham Court Road subway says:

"Subways are the best pitches and, in my opinion, this tunnel is the best of the lot. This isn't just any old pitch. This is a pitch that you work up to over the years. It's the cream. When you play here, you've arrived."

Pete and the other four Tottenham Court Roaders meet every morning in a cafe to decide who will work which hours of the day in the tunnel:

"If one of us doesn't show, he's not allotted any time. We work more or less on an hourly rota. We've found that five people is just the right number of work this tunnel. Outsiders are discouraged if they try to crash in. Of course, if one of the five leaves as sometimes happens, we consider other singers who want to come in. If they're not good enough, they don't get in. There's a standard on this pitch."

Pete became a busker three years ago. He started off in Paris when he ran out of money:

"Buskers can earn more money in Paris, but the cost of living is higher. When I started up in London, you could find pitches everywhere, but it's very overcrowded now. Everyone's at it."

Figures of £40 to £50 a week were mentioned by other subway buskers as being the amounts they could earn in good weeks.

Playing for the first time in public in another less popular tunnel under Tottenham Court

Road is a young busker named Michael. He said:

"I sat down here and started to play because I needed the tube fare. I've been here for an hour and I've got enough for the tube fare and a cup of coffee."

He describes his music as "earthy."

"What other kind of music can you play down a tunnel? I like to play Bo Diddley things best."

Michael used to work in a record shop.

"Admittedly, I haven't been down here long but so far, it beats serving behind a counter."

David Coulson's favourite tunnel is the one passing under Marble Arch. Here, there is no organised system, but the buskers have an agreement whereby if they've been playing for over an hour and another busker comes along, they hand over the pitch.

18 year old David came to London from Sunderland when he couldn't get a grant to see him through college.

"I've been trying to get a job and have been for several interviews but so far, I've had no luck."

David makes about £6 a week:

"Plus the odd button and polo mint. Once someone threw in half a joint."

He sings mainly Dylan numbers: "I can't play what I want to really. I mean, I can't do any quiet numbers. If I did, I wouldn't get any money. People want to hear some noise coming from you as they walk past. Most passers-by are quite friendly. It's only the odd one or two who shout 'Get your hair cut,' and 'Do you enjoy begging?'"

So far, David has had his name taken twice, but has never been charged with obstruction.

Martyn Clipsham wasn't so lucky. While working a pitch outside a shoe shop in Leicester Square, he was arrested for obstruction after eight people stopped to listen to him. Result - an overnight stay in a prison cell and a £5 fine.

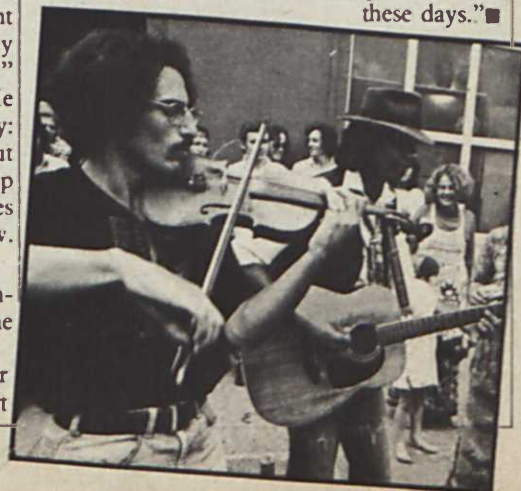
"One does best in the seasons of goodwill and on other special occasions. Once I was busking in a subway on St. Patrick's Day. Luckily for me, a lot of Irishmen were passing by. I earned £15 in a few hours and could have got even more if the tunnel hadn't become so congested."

Once he had a pair of socks given to him.

"I was wearing 'Scholls' and no socks, and I suppose this boy thought I didn't have any. Anyway he sat down, took off his socks and gave them to me. I didn't want them, but I didn't like to refuse."

Martyn reckons his busking days are done, but would recommend it as a way for any musically-inclined young person to see around and pay his own way:

"It's not begging. People give you money because they like to hear the music. A penny for a song is one of the best bargains around these days."





After making *Tout Va Bien*, Jean-luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin produced *A Letter to Jane* (1972) to accompany screenings of *Tout Va Bien* at the San Francisco and New York Film Festivals in 1972. The following abridged transcript of the film's soundtrack is meant to serve as a stimulus to debate on the aesthetics of the visual image and the relationship of the "intellectual" to the "revolution". Women & Film, who first published the extracts asked Jane Fonda to reply to the *Letter* but she chose not to comment.

A Letter to Jane

Jean-Luc Godard (JLG): 'We found this photograph in an issue of *L'Express* early in August, 1972. This photo shows you, yes you Jane, serving the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence.

There is a problem that we can't avoid. We are both men and you are a woman. In Vietnam the question is not put that way but here it is. And as a woman you undoubtedly will be hurt a little, or a lot, by the fact that we are going to criticise a little or a lot, your way of acting in this photograph. Hurt? Because once again, as usual, men are finding ways to attack women.

This photograph was taken at the request of the North Vietnamese government representing on this occasion, the revolutionary alliance between the people of South Vietnam and the people of North Vietnam. But the text (which was written by Express staff writers)

doesn't mention the Vietnamese people in the photograph. This photograph, like any other photograph, is physically mute. It talks through the mouth of the text written beneath it. This text does not emphasize, does not repeat, because a photograph speaks and says things in its own way. The fact that the militant is in the foreground, and Vietnam is in the background. The text says that Jane Fonda is questioning the people of Hanoi. But the magazine does not publish the questions asked, nor the answers given by the representatives of the North Vietnamese people in this photograph. In fact, the text should not describe the photograph as Jane Fonda questioning but as Jane Fonda listening. This much is obvious and perhaps the moment only lasted 1/250th of a second but that has been recorded and sent throughout the Western World. ►

Being written this way, the text is probably trying to tell us that the photograph was taken at random during a discussion where the actress-militant was actually questioning the people of Hanoi and therefore we shouldn't pay any attention to the details of the mouth being closed but we will see a little further on that it is not a question of chance or rather, even if it is a chance, the chance is then exploited according to the logical necessity of capitalism - the necessity for capital to describe what is real at the same time it reveals it. In other words, the necessity of tricking the customer about the product.

LESS ELEMENTARY ELEMENTS, LESS ELEMENTARY ELEMENTS.

The camera took this photograph from a low-angle. Actually in the history of cinema, this low point of view cannot be considered an innocent one. This fact has been emphasised technically and socially by Orson Wells in his first pictures. The choice of frame is not neutral or innocent either. The frame is composed in relation to what she is looking at. She is presented in the frame as if she were the star and that in fact is because the actress is an internationally known star. So on the one hand, the frame shows the star in a militant activity. And on the other it focuses on the militant as a star which is not the same thing or rather, which might be the same thing in Vietnam. But not in Europe or in the U.S.

The truth is, if this photograph had been presented by some Miss Jones or Smith, we think the same newspapers would have refused it as too ordinary. Ordinary, one must admit, just as it has become a very ordinary thing for an agricultural community situated just outside of Hanoi to rebuild its schoolhouse for the 20th time after the phantoms of Kissinger had destroyed it. But of course nobody is going to talk about this extraordinary-ordinary fact. Neither the militant being given star-treatment nor *L'Express*.

Jean-Pierre Gorin (J.P.G.): Neither will anything be said about what the American actress or her sisters, the Viet Minh actresses that one can see in the photographs on the next page have said to each other. Did the American actress ask about acting in Vietnam, or how someone who acts in Hollywood can act in Hanoi knowing he must return to Hollywood. *L'Express* doesn't mention anything about all that. And we think this is because the American actress doesn't talk about it either. It's true that the militant talked about the anti-personnel bombs and the dykes but one must not forget that the militant is also an actress, whereas, the Russell Tribunal and Ramsey Clarke, for example, aren't. We think that one must realise that because she is an actress, the officials in the White House will have no difficulty, if no one tries to stop them, saying that the actress has more or less unconsciously played into the enemy's hands and that she is just reciting a text that she has learned by heart. Such criticism can easily destroy all the efforts of the actress and the militant. And one must understand why she remains vulnerable to this kind of attack. We think in this case it is because the actress-militant did not refer to the dykes by using an example as that of the Vietnamese actress who works to fill the holes in the dykes and then acts in a theatrical representation in the village that is threatened by the breaking of the dykes. In relation to this we believe that if the militant considered herself first of all as an actress, and the Vietnamese were making use of her due on their level, she could begin to play a part historically, otherwise than in Hollywood.

JLG: In this photograph, in this reflection of reality, two people are seen facing the camera. The others have their back turned. Of the two people, one is in sharp focus and the other is not. In this photograph, the famous American is sharp and clear and the anonymous Vietnamese is blurry and unclear. But in reality, it is the American Left that is blurry and out-of-focus and the Vietnamese Left that is exceptionally sharp and clear.

The Vietnamese can stand being viewed out-of-focus because he has been in sharp focus for a long time in his everyday reality. The American is obliged to appear in sharp focus because the Vietnamese way of remaining clearly out-of-focus makes this inevitable. The American is obliged to focus clearly on his real lack of clarity. But nothing of that sort is said in the text. The general effect of this photograph emphasises that of another photograph of the actress on the cover of the same issue of *L'Express*. This cover composition is very revealing if one is willing to see that a photograph can cover up just as much as it reveals. A photograph imposes silence as it speaks.

JLG: The American Left says that the tragedy is not in Vietnam but in the US. The facial expression of the militant in this photograph is in fact that of a tragic actress. But a tragic actress with a particular social and technical background formed and

deformed by the Hollywood school of Stanislavsky and show biz.

JLG: The actress also had this expression in *Klute* as she looked at her friend, a policeman played by Donald Sutherland, with a tragic sense of pity on her face and made up her mind to spend the night with him.

JLG: And even further back in the actress' paternal history, within the history of the cinema, it was still the same expression that Henry Fonda used to cast a profound and tragic look on the black people in *Young Mr Lincoln* made by the future admiral of the Navy, John Ford.

JPG: One can also find this expression on the opposite side as John Wayne expresses his deep regrets about the devastation of the war in Vietnam in the *Green Berets*. In fact, it's an expression of an expression and it appeared inevitably by chance just as the talkies were becoming a financial success.

JPG: If one looks carefully at the Vietnamese behind the actress, one realises very quickly that each face is expressing something entirely different than that of the American militant. But even if one can't see what he's looking at, one can see that his face reflects what he must face every day - anti-personnel bombs, broken dykes and the torn bodies of dead women, the house which must be rebuilt for the nth time, the hospital and a lesson to be learned. Lenin said, 'First lesson: Learn. Second lesson: Learn. Third lesson: Learn.' And this face immediately reflects a day to day struggle for a very simple reason. It's not just the face of a revolutionary but a Vietnamese revolutionary. The long past of struggling has been written on this face by French, Japanese and American imperialism.

JLG: This Vietnamese face needs no words written underneath. Anywhere in the world people will say this man is Vietnamese and the Vietnamese are fighting to kick America out of Asia. Let's look, on the other hand, at the face of the American actress without the rest of the photograph. One can see right away that it doesn't reflect anything or rather that it only reflects itself. But a self that is nowhere lost in the infinite immensity and immortal tendons of the pieta by Michaelangelo. A woman's face that does not reflect other women. The Vietnamese face was a function reflecting reality; whereas, the American's face is a function that only reflects a function. A face that could also belong to a hippie needing a fix, or a student in Eugene, Oregon whose favourite runner, Prefontaine, just lost the Olympic 5,000 metres, or a young girl in love who has just been dropped by her boyfriend, and also to a militant in Vietnam. It's too much. There is too much information in too small an element of space and time.

At the same time we are sure that the militant is thinking of Vietnam; and not sure at all because she might be thinking of something entirely different as we have suggested. Therefore we must eventually ask the question why is this photograph of a militant actress who is not necessarily thinking of Vietnam being published precisely in place of that of an actress-militant who is necessarily thinking of Vietnam. Because the true reality of this photograph lies in just this: A star disguised, unveiled by the absence of Max Factor. But *L'Express* doesn't say anything about this. Because that would be starting the revolution in journals. It would be the beginning of revolution to say in Europe and the US that today it is not possible to take a photograph of someone thinking of something - Vietnam, fucking, Ford Motors, factories, a sand on the seashore, etc.

JLG: OTHER ELEMENTS OF ELEMENTS

JPG: The North Vietnamese are right in taking the risk of publishing this picture. Or rather, they have their reasons for doing so. This picture plays the part of a small screw in the mechanism that has been conceived for developing their current military-diplomatic offensive. This picture is one of the 1,000 that the Vietnamese have given with their blood in answer to US war crimes.

JLG: And like what many Americans would have done, the American actress accepted to go to Vietnam and play this part. She went to Hanoi to help the Vietnamese revolution. Now, one must ask the question, 'How does she help?' Or more precisely, 'How does she play this part?'

JPG: The American actress at work in this picture is helping the Vietnamese people in their struggle for independence but she is not only helping in Vietnam but particularly in the US and Europe too since the picture has come to us in France as well. As we look at the picture here, then, we are freely obliged to ask: 'Does this picture help us?' And above all, 'Does it help us to help Vietnam.' Vietnam forces us to ask this question.

JLG: PUTTING TOGETHER SOME ELEMENTS OR ELEMENTS OF ELEMENTS.

continued on page 36

NEWS

Lottery of the lowest~ Asian families in Southall

The life of the A's is not atypical of the way most Asians in Southall live. Southall is now one of the most densely populated areas of England, 40% of the adult population, and 60% of the children are Asian.

Asians originally came to Southall in the late 50's. An ex-British officer, who had fought in India returned to India after the war and persuaded a large number of Indian workers to come over to England to work in the Woolf Rubber factory - in which he had financial interests. They were promised good pay and houses - and so they came with others following. By the time news reached home that England wasn't the promised land 30,000 Asians mostly Sikhs from the Punjab, were on their way to Southall.

The overcrowding has caused terrible accommodation problems - and the fact that most people are huddled in tiny houses along the railway line constitutes a ghetto. Not only is it difficult to find accommodation, but Asians are charged exorbitant rents for nothing more than one room and a gas ring. 'Many Indian landlords, I would say most of them' Nerys Williams, a Southall community worker, points out 'will not issue rent books which means that the families have no security of tenure. Also, they can never apply for a rent rebate.

Mrs A and Mrs A live in two small upstairs rooms in a long terraced street in Southall full of identical grey Victorian houses. In the front room Mr A, Mrs A and their ten year old daughter sleep. Their other 'room', a pokey box room is their sixteen year old son's bedroom. The room is cluttered, two double beds, three cupboards, a table and lots of bits and pieces, everything, in fact, that the family owns. The floor is covered by cheap, cracking lino. The room measures about 14 foot square. Mrs A speaks no English at all. At five o'clock in the afternoon she looked tired and ill, after her days work, in Heathrow airport. Mrs A works as a cleaner in Terminal 3. She's been there for a year now and is just due for her first holiday. 365 long, 8-hour days, take home pay £13 a week, with not even Christmas

or bank-holidays off. Everyday she gets up at 4, is taken by bus to the airport, starts work at 6, works until 9, when the cleaners are allowed a 20 minute break during which they are meant to eat their main meal of the day. After that it's solid work until 2, no breaks, no chance of sitting down at all.

Mr A works in the Skyway hotel. For a 6 day week, 8 hour day he earns £21, net. Earlier this year Mr A was very ill. He was given 2 weeks sick pay and then was left to National Assistance which came to £4 a week. The A's as with most other Asian families in this country have no rent book (see below), so they could claim no rent allowance. Mr A was sick for two months - during that time the whole family had to live on £17 a week, still paying £7 a week rent.

The landlords who have mortgaged their houses cannot by law rent out rooms. So no rent book, no security. One woman and her son moved 120 times in the space of two years.'

For Asian men work is in the factories and at the airports. In Southall itself there are few factories - buses come in the morning taking their workers out and bringing them back in the evening. At midday the town is practically deserted.

For women the working situation is crucial. The high rents and cost of living necessitates that most householders have two bread

winners. The options are few. The local bra-factory, the hospital, which demands that Asian women wear regulation uniforms which show their legs and offend their culture, the transport cafes, and the airport. At the airport, the conditions are appalling. Women work as cleaners for Acme Industrial Cleaners Ltd. Terminals 1 & 2 belong to the General and Municipal Worker Union and terminal 3 belongs to the Transport and General Workers Union. The women speak virtually no English, making union activity almost impossible. Supposedly, women are paid 38p an hour on the daily rate and 49½p an hour on the nightly rate.

Men, in contrast are paid 47p an hour during the day and 61p at night. The hours are long - as the story of Mrs A illustrates - and the wage slips always omit the number of hours worked - thus white washing the true situation. The actual jobs in the airport are loaded against Asian women. Cleaners in the main part of the airport don't get to sit down all day - cleaners in the lavatories, all white women, can at least put their feet up every so often. Mrs A's reply to being asked what her dream was said 'I'd like to work in the lavatory, at least I can sit down'.

The unions have neglected the plight of these Asian women completely. Union dues are deducted at the source and many women are confused as to which union they belong to. Which is hardly surprising, considering they hardly champion women's rights let alone the Asians. Now the TGWU are going to start subscribing towards English classes held in Southall, which is the first step in the right direction. The unions have not been over zealous in implementing a closed shop agreement signed on the 1st of May this year between the G.M.U.W., T.G.W.U. and the Acme management. The agreement meant paying time and ½ for any hours worked in excess of 40 hours a week.

NEWS

Language problem

Two little girls died in their burning home because their mother a Kenyan Asian, could not make neighbours understand that her children were still inside.

The mother, Mrs. Satnum Singh Sandbu was dragged screaming from her burning home while her daughters, aged six and four, remained trapped in an upstairs room. One of her neighbours said afterwards, 'None of us understood what she was trying to say and no-one thought of going upstairs to see if anyone else was in the building.'

Apart from the assumption that language classes for immigrants are a basic starting point in community relations, it's examples like that, read in newspapers, which emphasise their necessity.

In Southall this is realised to such an extent that language classes are mushrooming up all over the place. While some offer a professional service with qualified teachers there are others which are well intentioned but amateurish with an aura of missionary zeal about them.

Certainly there's nothing amateurish about the Pathway Further Education Centre. Apart from running fulltime classes for students and language training classes for employers, it offers part time classes to women. Those who attend in the day can take full advantage of the Centre's playgroup for their children. Those who work and cannot make it to the classes attend Pathway classes held in the local factories.

The Centre's Principal, Evelyn Davis, criticises the stress that is placed upon the assumed passivity of Asian women.

'As far as I can tell Punjabi women are far from passive. The fact that so many come to classes says a lot for them. They realise that by mastering the language they can gain a new found independence. The fact that they are working towards this



Students coming out of Southall College of Technology.

independence does not make them passive. It is their inability to communicate in English which sometimes makes them appear passive.'

Her pupils, she says, seem to be motivated into learning English for economic reasons. 'They want to get a job, and if they have one already they realise that knowing English makes their work situation rewarding.'

Their children are also another reason for coming to classes explains Evelyn. 'The mothers realise that they are growing apart from their children whom they see as being absorbed into the English way of life by schools and outside activities. They want to be able to keep up with them.'

'Also, once they can speak the language they don't have to drag their children around with them to act as interpreters at the doctor's, the clinic, the Post Office.'

Because she wants to see her pupils coping with the routine of everyday life she emphasises the practical aspects of language.

'After all', as one English language teacher remarked, 'A woman who wants to know how to ask for her bus fare, doesn't want to be able to recite 'Hamlet' at the bus conductor.'

An increasing number of language classes are presenting vocabulary related to social benefit claims, unemployment situations, and trade union terms.

'Teaching the language of shopping is not enough,' Evelyn emphasises, 'Women in Southall can get away with shopping only in Indian shops and not speaking a word of English. She wants to be able to cope with life by herself instead of having to take her nine-year old son with her everywhere to translate.' Coming to terms with the English language it seems, is the only way some Asian women can confront the exploitation of their work potential and their deprivation as members of a Welfare State.

Mr & Mrs T and their four year old son live in one room, measuring about 10 feet by 12 feet beside the railway line.

Compared to many other families in Southall they are well off and live in good conditions. As yet their son is still small enough to share their bed without making it too cramped.

Everything the T's possess is in the room. TV, bulging cupboards, shelves hidden behind curtains, a table and a dressing table. The room is immaculately clean and tidy. They share a kitchen and a bath room with their landlords who occupy the rest of the two up, two down terrace house.

Mr T works in the Airfix factory. For a six-day, 40 hour week his take home pay is £25. Mrs T works as a cleaner in the transport cafe on the M4. She works 5 days a week, 8 hours a day, for 42p an hour - her take home pay is £11. She speaks very little English, hello, goodbye and a few other words, so her husband interpreted.

'I get up every morning at 4.30 and go in the bus to the motorway. Coming back, I have to walk 2 miles to the bus stop as they only arrange one trip a day.

My boy is looked after during the day by a child minder. My husband takes him there when he leaves home to go to work, about 6 o'clock in the morning, and I pick him up on the way home. It's about a half mile walk from the house and costs me £3 a week.

'There is no cleaners union at my job. No sick pay. I am going to evening classes to learn English, but I find I am very tired by 8 o'clock in the evening, and so don't go every week!'

Mrs T has yet another problem. She comes from the South of India, unlike the majority of the residents in Southall. So not only can't she speak English, she can't talk to many of her Indian neighbours.

'I think that my employers should provide me with English lessons, my husband has been taught English where he works.'

The T's pay £5 a week in rent. Every month they send home £6 to Mrs T's mother in India. Their landlord owns his house on a mortgage, so they, like other families, have no rent book. They've been in England for five years and have moved 5 times. Mrs T only started work about a year ago because they needed more money. As families in Southall go, the T's are very fortunate.

Two years ago an abortive attempt was made to unionise workers at the Wynuna Corset Company Ltd. in Southall. At the time a small survey was made to see whether complaints of low pay by two Punjabi women workers at the factory were justified. The survey's findings suggested they were.

Twenty five women of the total 120 employed at the time were interviewed - mainly Punjabis from India and East Africa.

The average take home pay of those interviewed was £9.70 for a 40 hr week, while the lowest amount recorded was £5.00 and the highest £18 per week.

The women complained that on starting, their initial salary was paid on a time rate basis for a period of four weeks. They then progressed, or regressed, onto the existing piece rates which were not laid down but bargained for according to the work done - usually after the work was done.

Michael Mindell, London Senior Officer of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers points out that 'One girl might be slower and less skilled than another. If they are both working on a piece rate system then she is bound to get less'.

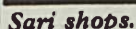
Earnings of the group who had been at the factory for less than two years fell well below the statutory minimum wage i.e., £11 10p per week (gross), as stipulated by the Wages Council.

According to Nerys Williams - survey initiator - conditions have not improved much since then.

But the factory was unionised as a result of her efforts. By July this year there was one hundred per cent membership. Here's how...

December '72

Rowntree Trust grants Nerys

**Fran McLaine**

Mike Cohen

£450 under auspices of Ealing Community Relations Council to organise women into unions.

January '73

Assisted by volunteers - International Socialists - she visits the nine women, who, at the time of the survey opted out of union membership at the last moment. These women pass on names of other women in the factory. Michael Mindell is contacted. He plans to collect as

many P.60 forms together as possible. "These give the details of annual earning and from that we can judge the average weekly earnings." He hopes to finally confront the management with them.

February/March

Sixty women have been visited and are invited to a meeting to discuss the situation. Only eight Gujarati women turn up. They join the union.

April

Rowntree Trust awards Nerys a further £450. By now 35 women are paying union dues. A meeting is called to test the keenness of the members. Over twenty people attend. Mindell decides that it is time for the union to declare itself openly to the management. Another meeting is held at the end of the month. This time thirty women attend. Mindell's optimism augments.

Plans are underway for English classes in the factory and it's hoped there will be special classes for shop stewards to learn trade union jargon. Basic English will be taught to other trade union members.

May

Mindell meets the management and is surprised. "I was a bit taken aback by their open manner. All the books were given to me to look through. The Wages Council had been there before me and had found everything in order too. In fact I was very surprised to find that wages for the top workers hit the £26 mark which is very good. They also pay the 15 to 16 year old girls the same rates as the 17 to 18 year old. The management agreed to union contributions being paid through wages and even agreed initially to English classes being held in the factory."

June

The first union meeting in the factory is addressed by Mindell.

July

Elections take place and eight women are selected for the Shop Stewards Representative Committee. Several women tell Nerys that their previously irregular weekly wage - wavering between £8 to £12 - has stabilised at around £15.

Spare Rib 19

Women alone

Manjulah's from Kenya, is twenty five but looks ten years older. She was married in Mombasa nine years ago and came to Southall last year. Shortly after their arrival she walked out on her husband. He had, she says, brought a girl back to their home and told her to do all the housework and cooking for them. . . . "While they had all the fun. Of course I left." Despite all this she says she still loves him and refuses to divorce him. "You see ours was an arranged marriage . . . we never saw each others faces until it was time for the marriage to be consummated. His mother was always telling me what to do. I think she worked Black Magic on me in Kenya which made me miscarry twice."

Her aged parents travelled from their son's home in the North to be with her and to make sure she did not divorce.

"They came to comfort and help me but are so old and can't understand oneword of English that they are completely bewildered. It is I who am comforting and helping them instead. They have become a liability because I have to do everything for them."

They all live in one small room crammed with suitcases and littered with half unpacked saris. "I was so lucky to get this place. It took me such a long time. Nobody seemed to want to give me a place even though they'd advertised. Eventually I was just wandering around knocking on doors. But Indians don't want anything to do with a woman who isn't with her husband or family. They are suspicious and think she must be a prostitute or something."

Manjulah earns £9 for a forty hour week sewing blazers. The work is hard she says and hurts her arms. She pays £4.50 rent. The rest she spends on food for herself and her parents. Her father draws an old age pension which helps to buy any clothes, cleaning agents etc.

How does she see her future? "I shall just live with his name, alone. There is nothing else for me to look forward to at all."

She has every reason to feel despondent. Because of the restrictions her culture places



Fran McLane

upon her she is not free to come and go socially as she pleases. Even a trip to the cinema with a girlfriend is frowned upon.

Life is difficult enough for the widow who can only depend upon relatives to draw her back into the extended family circle. She at least maintains her dignity, but overnight the divorced or abandoned woman gains a reputation of worthlessness and notoriety. She becomes a social outcast. After all, the Indian male reared on the promised delights of female virginity in marriage would emphatically not consider spending his wedding night with a woman whose hymen had already been broken by another. No wonder the future for both widowed and divorced women in this context is inevitably bleak.

Manjulah in one respect is lucky. She speaks good English and can at least make herself economically independent by working in a local factory.

For the woman who has no working knowledge of English her problems are instantly magnified. Alarminglly.

At this point Nerys Williams, 26, comes to the rescue. She runs English classes for immigrant women and seems to know every Asian family living in Southall. Walking down the High-Street with her is like listening to an Asian roll call, "Hi, Manjit," "Salaam Mr. Mohammed," "Theekhai Shanti?"

She's helped countless Asian

women through the traumas of their newfound and invariably unwelcome independence.

She explains, "The problems that these women encounter when widowed or deserted are in no way similar to those experienced by their Western counterparts. Their situation is intensely aggravated by their lack of English and their total passivity and reluctance to act positively. This gives one the mistaken impression," says Nerys, "that they are uncooperative."

This is merely the result of a lifetime of servitude and dependence upon the immediate family, husband and children.

"To have to function suddenly as an independent, thinking person and to be economically responsible for the rest of the family is a great strain for them. They are completely lost and helpless."

MUNAWAR SULTANNA CHOUDRY

Her husband died only days before they were due to leave Nairobi for England. The strain of getting the family organised for the trip was too much for his heart she says, and cries at the recollection. Undeterred and still in mourning she came to England with her seven children all at school age and with something less than an elementary knowledge of English. On arrival the only accommodation they could find was one room in Southall into which they all crammed. The

kitchen and bathroom were shared with the landlord's family of four. The health of the children began to deteriorate, they could not do their homework. Mrs. Choudry - a devout Muslim - began chainsmoking.

It was only through her visits to Nerys Williams's English classes that things began to improve. Nerys approached Ealing Council's Housing Department who said they could do nothing to rehouse the family except put her on the Council House Waiting List for five years. Nerys persisted. A council spokesman informed her that only when the family was literally standing on the pavement with suitcases, the door closed behind them and with nowhere else to go could any attempt be made to find alternative accommodation.

The landlord refused to go to court to serve them an Eviction Order. He did not want to jeopardise his mortgage which stipulated no lodgers. Legally the Social Services Welfare department was not obliged to do anything until the Eviction Order was served. So they didn't.

In desperation the then new born Ealing Squatters Association was approached. Mrs. Choudry became their first Squatter when she moved into a large flat on two floors off Ealing Broadway. Shortly after all the rubbish and debris had been cleared away the ceilings fell in, floors were flooded and the whole flat had to be replumbed. Things haven't improved much in the two years she's been living there. It's still damp and the children still cough a lot.

Even though her English has improved, her children still take time off school to take her to the doctors, the hospital, the Town Hall, the Department of Health and Social Security. She still brings forms to Nerys and myself to help her read and fill them in. She even brought round a duplicated Labour Party questionnaire worried to death that it was another bill to be paid.

Rosie Boycott & Christine Aziz

RACISM, DISCRIMINATION & THE UNIONS

Geoffrey Sheridan

There was a rumour circulating on the picket line at Standard Telephones and Cables that a shop steward in the Electricians' Union had threatened Asian workers that if they joined the West Indians who were on strike, they would be reported to the police and deported.

Perhaps the rumour wasn't true, but the strikers were quite prepared to believe it. There was, after all, only one white worker at STC's North London factory who had come out in support of the West Indian machine setter the members of the Electricians' Union were refusing to train.

Witnessing the events at the gates of STC would have rapidly dispelled any doubts that racialism divides the working class, shatters elementary trade union solidarity, and that white workers - men and women - are deeply imbued with the ideology by which the ruling class justified Britain's imperialist ravages and now effectively isolates an increasingly more insecure and legally deportable immigrant labour force.

'Throughout this part of the British Dominions,' Earl Grey wrote of colonial Africa in the 19th century, 'the coloured people are generally looked upon by the whites as an inferior race, whose interests ought to be systematically disregarded when they come into competition with their own, and who ought to be governed mainly with a view to the advantage of the superior race. . . . The Kaffir population should be made to furnish as large and as cheap a supply of labour as possible.'

Now the 'Kaffirs' are being imported to help prop up the decaying metropolis, and the trade unions, for the most part, turn a nearly blind eye to their super-exploitation. Officially, of course, they are opposed to racialism, as dozens of resolutions passed at annual conferences attest. In reality, they do next to nothing to confront it, or to take the practical steps necessary to recruit and involve the immigrant workers rooted in industrial backwaters.

'It would be foolish to claim that there are no instances of prejudice to be found,' Vic Feather acknowledged when he



Peter Harrap

was the TUC's assistant general secretary in 1968.

'The trade union movement is concerned with a man or a woman as a worker,' Feather went on to assert in his 1970 Westminster Trinity lecture. 'The colour of a man's skin has no relevance whatever to his work.' To nail down the hypocrisy and futility of these noble sentiments (self-evident to women trade unionists), the strike at STC serves as a useful hammer.

So far as the management was concerned, it was an inter-union dispute. Its hands were clean. STC is part of the International Telephone and Telegraph corporation, and ITT is pledged to complete equality of opportunity (not to mention attempting to sabotage national elections when it suits its multinational interests).

STC's managing director, Ken Corfield, had noted that at ITT's head office in New York: 'At least a third of the secretaries are coloured. They are not only bright and intelligent, but pretty and smart. . . .'

It just so happens that half the 3,000 manual workers at STC in North London are black, and although many of them have worked there for over 10 years, not one has been made a supervisor. Promotion of any kind - from the lower grade jobs to which the vast majority of West Indians and Asians are confined, to the skilled work which is virtually a white preserve - has involved organisation and struggle on the part of the black workers themselves.

But it did not begin to happen until a younger generation in the late '60s refused to turn the other cheek. For West Indians like Basil Spence, who worked at STC as a machine operator for 13 years until he finally quit in 1969, it was nothing but a long period of 'frustration and discontent'.

'I had the desire and the ability,' he says, 'but there wasn't the opportunity to go forward. I made several attempts to seek promotion to various types of work but in all cases I was turned down. There wasn't the ghost of a chance for a black man to rise up above semi-skilled work. I know so many who tried and failed.' Lewis now runs a successful record business, and is - bizarrely - a Conservative councillor in Haringey.

It was three years ago that the predominantly black machine operators in the press shop at STC decided to elect their own shop stewards, and the white machine setters - who earn £10 a week more, and have the benefit of lighter, skilled work - promptly left the AUEW to join the Electricians' Union (EPTU). Transfers were speeded up when a white AUEW steward had his credentials removed for recommending the promotion of a white operator, instead of a black worker who had been on the job for 10 years, and when the management chose the former, there followed numerous stoppages and go-slows until the first black was selected as a trainee setter, in 1971.

Roderick Adams, a young Jamaican, was the second to be selected, after five months' vigorous negotiation, and last winter he started his 12-months training on the night-shift, where all the setters had joined the EPTU. In July, after the AUEW setters on the day-shift had agreed to train a third black worker, the EPTU stewards immediately informed Adams that his training was at an end, and the management sent him home.

It was an open alliance between a racist management and racist white workers. 'You are the niggers in the woodpile,' the personnel manager subtly put it to the West Indian stewards, and the AUEW had little option but

to make the strike for Adams's reinstatement official. Two hundred West Indians came out, together with the white AUEW convenor of shop stewards, Ted Corbett. It was the first strike at the plant for over 30 years.

'I told the personnel manager,' says Corbett, 'that the woodpile he referred to was likely to become the funeral pyre of this factory if they don't get the situation under control.' But the management's idea of control was a docile and divided labour force, and in the end they won. Adams went back, but he was forced to continue his training on the day shift. No doubt the EPTU celebrated.

The Asian workers might have been won over if the strike committee had taken up the issue of the Immigration Act, and explained that by fighting racism on the picket lines, the Asians would have been fighting for a stronger union - which would help defend them against racist laws.

As it was, the Asian women workers at STC told Corbett that they wanted to join the strike but were afraid to do so. Instead, they became the largest contributors to the strike fund.

But most blame must be laid squarely at the door of the AUEW itself. The officials made it clear from the start that they didn't approve of the confrontation. The union's district office told a Red Weekly reporter: 'We are trying to cool this strike down. You buggers are trying to hot it up!' Strike pay had a habit of not arriving on time, or simply not arriving at all.

The struggle, however, is far from over. Immediately before the return to work, a day-long discussion was held between the strikers and the members of the black and revolutionary organisations who had supported them. One result is that a black caucus has been formed inside the factory, and regular discussion meetings are now being held, with outside speakers.

Half the black workers at STC are women, and a number joined the 200 or so who initially came out on strike. Although the strike committee agreed that pay and conditions for the black women workers were even worse than those for the men, they had little information on what the women's situation actually was. They work in different sections from the men, and there was scarcely any communication between them. The newly-formed caucus operating within the AUEW aims to break down these barriers.

The ones that got away..

This column will bring you some of the news you might be sorry to have missed . . . not the 'Equal Opportunity' paper, you've had plenty of that, not even the TUC's genuflections (again) in the direction of equal pay, opportunities, pensions, et cetera (but did you know that railwaymen's leader Ray Buckton, receiving a query from a Tory MP as to whether women would now be allowed by his union to drive trains, wittily replied that if the MP knew of any Tory ladies seeking such employment, he would put the matter to his executive . . .).

The unfortunate Moira Simbi, the black woman who has had to marry a stranger in order to escape deportation from Britain, looks as if she is in for even rougher a time than normal if she ever needs to go on Social Security. For Daily Express columnist Chapman Pincher has darkly vowed to his readers that he will 'make regular enquiries' as to whether she is receiving this beneficence because of her husband's failure to support her.

Still, with a bit of luck, Chapman Pincher spying on Moira Simbi will be spotted by an S.S. snooper spying on Moira Simbi, accused of cohabitation, and forced to support her himself. . . .

While journalists and jurists shook their heads over this pathetic business and hoped that men who married women with the sole intention of bestowing their nationality (whether for money, or, as in the case of Moira Simbi's husband, as a favour) would end up regretting it, another kind of business deal between the sexes got rather less coverage: namely, the revelation that nationalised prostitutes were being provided to diplomats visiting Britain from overseas. Such censure as there was, was reserved for the wasting of the taxpayer's money and the risks that the diplomats might get compromised and/or infected; no breath of uneasiness that the world's diplomats are the sort of men who "expect" to be provided with a human being for the night as a perk of the job.

Of course, no woman *has* to become a prostitute, or so it is argued . . . but what about the findings of an international symposium on victimology held in Jerusalem on September 8/9, that many rape victims "invite their fate"? Hitch-hike rapes, according to Berkely

police, were nearly always committed on "submissive" (i.e. ideally feminine?) women, and "the woman's deportment contributes to her victimisation." The report, appearing in the Sunday Times, was illustrated by a cartoon of a girl hitching a lift from a rapist (you can tell he's a rapist, 'cos he's got RAPIST written across his registration plates, see, but she "shows a fatalism regarding the hazards involved in hitch-hiking" so she'll get in anyway.). She was wearing shorts, a T-shirt, plimsolls and a rucksack, and she was smiling and sticking her thumb out. Now you or I might think this is a normal way for a hitch-hiker to dress and act, but apparently this is what they mean about the woman's "deportment" contributing to her fate. Why don't they say what they mean, namely, that a woman who presumes to hitch about alone and dress comfortably and generally act as if she were free or something crazy like that, deserves her punishment when it comes?

More victims who are thought to 'ask for it' and not to deserve much in the way of help, are unmarried mothers, this time the ones who are also students. In a little publicised "tidying up" operation, these women have suddenly lost up to £180 in dependents' grants. The Guardian broke the story two days before the 'Equal Opportunity' paper came out . . . there has been precious little explanation, there will be no compensation (S.S. will only help during vacation) and there was no warning (N.U.S. didn't notice when the proposal was pushed through earlier in the year.) The National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child is taking up the case with the Departments of Health and Social Security, and Education . . . women affected are likely to get more joy out of the National Council than out of NUS.

And talking of money and mothers, in Nice on September 11, French Public Health Minister Poniatowski suggested to a Council of Europe conference that women who stayed at home to look after their children should be recognised as performing an "economic activity" and paid accordingly. The sting in the tail of this proposal (on which no decision was taken) was that it was to be done in the name of preserving the nuclear family; women in the home, even paid women in the home, would be, according to M. Poniatowski, the most effective and economic antidote to juvenile delinquency.

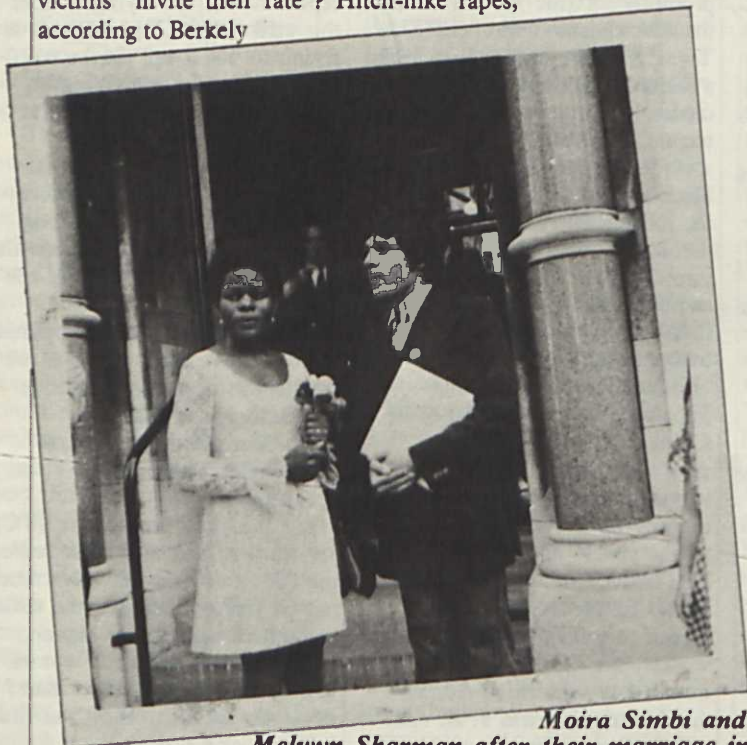
Also in Europe, San Marino, the oldest but smallest republic, has been dragged kicking and screaming into the nineteenth century with a bill that will allow women to hold public office and enter into legal agreements.

The elasticity of women's abilities continues to be a thing of great wonder. You know how we're unable to carry heavy weights, unless they're babies or shopping, and totally unsuited to working at night, except as nurses, and completely useless at driving anything bigger than a moped until war breaks out. A war, or a labour shortage. Oil based industries in Scotland are discovering that women can all of a sudden erect steel rigging at Cromarty Firth; and meanwhile the Road Haulage Association is offering up to £100 a week to ex-service women who want to drive juggernaut lorries.

Disturbing tale from America: the drugs firm of Alza is developing a new birth control device which it is trying out on Chinese women. The device sounds interesting: a once-a-year IUD-type piece of plastic that releases hormones gradually; but what on earth are the Chinese authorities thinking of? And why won't Alza try it on American women if it's safe enough for the Chinese?

Two flickers of hope for some of the most wretchedly oppressed women in Britain today - the Disablement Income Group has issued a firm call for a pension for disabled housewives (most of whom get nothing at all, not being 'workers'), and the wives of male prisoners are forming a union to try and combat some of the ill-treatment they receive at the hands of the SS, to name but one.

Perhaps the saddest story of the month was that of the woman who wrote so movingly of the pain of widowhood in the Times. Her grief is palpable, but one cannot help feeling that she might not be quite so desperate if she did not suffer from the basic disrespect for her sex (and thus, presumably, her self) that leads her to write things like this: "The sudden lack of masculine company, male talk, and the overwhelming female companionship, is sad, as well as bad, for girls and boys alike."



Moira Simbi and Melwyn Sharman after their marriage in Brighton Registry Office on September 8th. Another item which missed the news headlines was that Moira's fate would have gone unnoticed were it not for the existence of a Brighton Voluntary Legal Advice centre - The Link. When the police arrived at Moira's home with no warning on a Sunday at lunchtime to tell her she was to be deported the next day at 3.45 a.m. her boyfriend managed to phone the Link. They organised lawyers, press and publicity - and the deportation order was dropped.

And this month's awards

SMUG LADY JOURNALISTS OF THE MONTH: Judy Jackson (Sunday Times) for the following: "Problem of daily becoming critical. All very well being career wife but problems frequent and hard to solve . . . Being a wife, mother and working journalist is hard, tiring and completely rewarding, so would be grateful if Women's Libbers and their opponents would stop shouting about their lot in life and let the rest of us get on with ours"; and Jean Rook (Express): "I am virtually my own sexless woman. My opportunity has knocked. I'm free to do anything he can do, better . . . but have you, for one old fashioned moment, thought what we women have lost this week? In Mr Carr's single stride, we lost protection, chivalry, tenderness, and women and children first."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH (Daily Telegraph, September 9) "Keeping nimble with lots of housework may be one of the secrets of the longevity of women, according to a Family Doctor booklet the health of men."

FOR GRATUITOUS INSULT ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF RELEVANCE: Arthur Woodburn, a former Labour MP, writing about how Trade Unionists are 'the nation's back-seat drivers' (funny, that, some of us would have said they were more like its engine) began his article thus: "a witty cartoon illustrating safety belts showed the belt round the mouth of the wife sitting next to the driver." (Scotsman, September 4).

SELLOUT

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SEXIST PUT-DOWN OF THE MONTH: The Express story about Jackie Smith being awarded a red beret for skydiving, accompanied a picture of her receiving the beret in mid-air with the caption, 'what a girl will do for a new hat.'

And the **IDIOT OF THE MONTH** is undoubtedly the Express staff reporter who, on 17 Sept., having told us that women drivers will no longer be able to keep their age secret since it will appear in code on the driving licence, went on to describe this revelation as "a shattering blow to women's lib."

Zoë Fairbairns

FAMILY ALLOWANCE REPLY

Dear Spare Rib,

I was disappointed with Selma James' article in Spare Rib No.15 about the feminist position on Family Allowances. The views in her article may be the views of a group in Women's Liberation, but they are certainly not this feminist's views. Nor, in my opinion, are they calculated to convert many women or men to the cause, the cause being, of course, considerably greater than any future one can see for Family Allowance.

So, what's wrong? For a (fairly trivial) start, I couldn't understand a few phrases: eg 'although they are not mutually exclusive, female poverty is not restricted to low income families'. Now I do understand this, word for word, but the portion I've underlined is either superfluous or sophistical, and reveals a thought process which could turn off many sympathisers. 'At the moment Thatcher will increasingly determine whether and what kind of social lives our children will have, and the price is that we must take an additional job.' Whether what? The price for what? I agree that these articles should present a challenge, but the challenge should be one of ideas, not of impenetrable style. I'm not being elitist about this, I just think any ideas and especially important new ideas, should be presented as clearly as possible, so that people have no excuse for not facing up to the implications.

On to more substantial ground. I think the basis of this campaign for FA has confused two issues, both important and quite distinct parts of the same problem. On the one hand, there is FA, paid to a mother in respect of her second and subsequent children. The tax credit system was to withdraw this benefit and replace it with credits on the father's income. The case against this had two main strands: (i) the children of 'unsupported' women would have been discriminated against and (ii) the children of 'supported' women are much more likely to have the money spent on them if it goes to their mothers rather than their fathers.

On the other hand, there is the issue of female poverty. FA was never intended to deal with this. I, for one, would be insulted if the government represented the 90p a week I draw as a contribution to my financial independence - and I'd be insulted if it were £90. It's a contribution to the children's financial independence, and in that context it is insulting at 90p a week. Most women however, are either poor or potentially poor. They are the victims not only of educational and industrial discrimination, of social conditioning and their own bad organisation, but also of the economic structure of the family, which in this respect is pre-capitalist and pre-feudal. Any attempt to remedy the financial position of the women in the family by cash payments for services rendered (eg, tax credits in recognition of the care of children under five as a full-time occupation) is beset by the usual problems attendant upon a capitalist transaction (eg, to use Selma James' example, when the child is five the money stops).

The answer is not to co-opt a benefit (FA) intended for quite another purpose (the alleviation of child poverty), even if it is women's continual cry 'But this is the only money we can call our own'. For one thing, what that means is that it's the only money we don't have to ask our husbands for and account to them for, it doesn't mean we regard it as money we spend on ourselves, and when we do spend it on ourselves we feel guilty. As the West Indian quoted by Selma James said, she wanted more than Family Allowance, she wanted wages. But, as I've said, 'capitalist' wages breed problems of their own.

The answer is surely to look at poverty as a whole. My favourite remedy is to divide the national income into equal share per head of population and dole it out to them irrespective of age, sex, marital status or employment. That is a serious suggestion and one which I should have thought would recommend itself to Women's Liberation. However, it is unrealistic in the sense that

there's no prospect of any government in this country implementing it.

In the meantime, the tax system is surely one of our better hopes. I find Selma James' statement 'Taxes by their nature redistribute wealth - upwards' quite extraordinary. Of course taxes can do this, and do, VAT for example certainly discriminates against the poor when they buy goods and services - but there's nothing in the nature of taxes in general which makes this inevitable.

Moreover, even more important than the incidence of tax collection on a population, is the manner in which those taxes are then used by the government, and the scope here for redistribution is very good.

The heinousness of VAT for example would be much reduced if the proceeds went to increase FA, or to establish a housewife's wage.

Two final gripes. One; Selma James wants financial independence in order, amongst other things, to determine when to end a marriage and when to continue - on our terms. I don't. I want equal terms. I suspect that's what Selma James wants too; if so, she should watch that sort of slip of the tongue. Two: why it is so fashionable these days to run down those good institutions we do have, when there are so many rotten ones screaming for a few well-aimed kicks? For example, both the NHS and FA are presented by Selma James as capitalist plots to keep the nation strong and healthy. I see nothing peculiarly capitalist in that. Strong and healthy to provide fodder for the cannon and the production line would be a capitalist plot, but I wouldn't blame the NHS or FA for that. If you must attack them, attack the low wages of nurses, the discrimination against women doctors, the arrogance of many doctors towards their patients, and so on.

So, given Selma James' account of the premises and demands of the Women's Liberation Family Allowance Campaign, I'm not surprised if they had continually to reiterate them. Women's Liberation was evidently talking about something else; as she says 'Our first concern was female poverty.' Therefore I would say 'HANDS OFF OUR FAMILY ALLOWANCES - AND HAND OVER SOMETHING FOR US TOO'. Surely we can care for children as well as ourselves? Of course we do care - why shouldn't Women's Liberation recognise it?

Susan Pollitt,
Oxted, Surrey.

PS I hope I haven't been rude to Selma James, I just disagree with her.

Our right to our lives

When the abortion law was passed in 1967 a number of very hard working people breathed a sigh of relief. After 30 years of campaigning women were to be allowed access to legal abortion in registered clinics and hospitals. At last it seemed possible that the huge death toll from illegal abortion could be reduced and women would be able to claim their most basic right to control their own bodies. Many of the old abortion law reform campaigners turned their attention to improving facilities for cheap or NHS abortions. The last thing that they expected was to have to defend the law they had fought so hard for. Unfortunately that is exactly what they are having to do this time with the help of the Womens Abortion and Contraception Campaign which was started in 1971 by women's liberation groups.

The backlash started in the year that the act was passed. Heading the movement was the Society

for The Protection of The Unborn child (sometimes known as the society for the production of unwanted children). The chairman was, and is Viscount Barrington, his qualifications for the job include, being a man, a bachelor in his sixties and a peer who doesn't lack a few bob. The reasons for the campaign are neither pragmatic nor humanitarian, they are wholly emotional. The problem is that the Anti-abortion people do not only put out emotive propaganda, though that is bad enough, but they have also bolstered their campaign with invented facts, half truths and misquotes of other people's research.

Perhaps the most horrifying example of this was the Wynn report. It came out as a serious medical report with the backing of The British Foundation for Education and Research in Child-Bearing. (This was subsequently discovered to be an anti-abortion organisation with

Phyllis Bowman of SPUC as its chairwoman using the name Phyllis Court.) The report contained gloomy facts about the long term effects on women, of abortion. One of these statistics came from Japan; The Wynns reported that infant deaths from congenital malformation had risen by 43% in the six years since the liberalisation of the abortion laws in Japan. The report which these statistics came from actually said that the number of infant deaths from this cause had dropped from 23.7 in 1950 to 19% in 1960. The statistics had in fact only shown an incidence of 14.7 in 1947 but this figure was thought to be inaccurate because of the confusion in registration of deaths and autopsies after the war. This was not the only 'unfortunate error' in the Wynn report but the press had already done their job in reporting the 'shock statistics' as they came out and were not interested in correcting the mistakes.

Since the liberalisation of the abortion laws in the United States the Right to Life Lobby has been getting into full technicolour action. They have produced a spread of colour pictures showing aborted foetuses at different stages along-side pictures of live babies. The effect is revolting, how could it be otherwise? Most of us live in an environment where the sight of blood is far from an everyday occurrence and I'm sure most people would feel equally revolted if they were asked to look at rather bad colour reproductions of the product of any operation. (I personally can't bear to look at pictures of child-birth either.) On the back of this publication is a list of 'facts' about abortion such as; question: 'But legalising abortion would eliminate criminal abortions.' answer: 'This is purely wishful thinking . . . When laws are liberalised the legal abortion rate sky rockets, the illegal abortion rate does not drop but frequently also rises.'

This particular fact is not backed up in any way, not surprisingly as it is fictitious. ▶



photo: Angela Phillips

The anti-abortion people seem to be convinced that women are rushing to get pregnant just in order to have an abortion. Women do not want to have abortions but they might want not to have babies. Unwanted pregnancies happen because of inadequate use of contraception. Either because the woman is unable to use effective methods or does not know enough about them. It can also be a result of contraception failure or simply forgetfulness. Whatever the cause it is not a wish to have an abortion. Abortion is not an alternative to contraception, it is usually expensive, not very pleasant and totally impractical among other things, but it must be available to all women who need it, freely and without the sort of moral judgements dished out by some NHS consultants ie. 'You are one step up from the gutter as far as I am concerned.'

At least one set of recent statistics have been ignored by the anti-abortion lobby. They are the ones recently collated by Malcolm Potts of the International Planned Parenthood Federation which indicate a rise in the use of contraception in New York since the liberalisation of the law. He is fairly cautious about his findings but apparently there has been a gradual dropping off in terminations in the city since the initial rise after the law was changed, as this is unlikely to indicate a growth of celibacy he feels that it might well be due to the efforts of abortion councillors who encourage all patients to use contraception in future, explain methods and refer women to clinics or doctors for follow up advice. It is to be hoped that councillors in this country will have an equally positive effect on their clients.

On November the 20th the anti abortion groups are organising a mass lobby of Parliament. The organisation will be superb but even if they do get the predicted 100,000 people there they can never outnumber the women who have had or might need abortions. The support for the abortion law is not noisy but it's most certainly there. If you are one of those people who feel that abortion is a woman's right, defend your right, contact the Women's Contraception and Abortion Campaign at the South London Women's Centre, 14 Radnor Terrace, S.W.8. or ring the Kingsgate place, 01.624 1952. Your support will be welcome; in cash if you cannot give bodily support and failing either of those write to your M.P. asking for his support.

Angela Phillips

NO MORE DOLLY FRIDAYS

Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

The Government's proposals for legislation are now available free at your local Department of Employment. They illustrate a dramatic change in principle of Government thinking on Sex Discrimination. At last they have been forced to recognise that discrimination is extremely widespread, and that it is detrimental to the community as whole. Yet, somewhat inevitably, such realisation has not inspired them to take the plunge and set up machinery that would actually be effective in radically altering the status of women in society.

Last month we published the

Women's Lobby demands for legislation to combat discrimination, now I just want to make a few comments on the Government proposals. The government is limiting its concern to the field of employment - vague promises of ensuring equal career guidance in schools are nothing more than a drop in the ocean of prejudice. By planning to repeal the regulations of the 1961 Factory Act limiting overtime and nightwork for women, the Government is merely using the demand for equality to worsen women's working conditions. This is not a demand to have



our cake and eat it, but rather the demand that equality must be seen as equalling upwards.

But there is one far more fundamental block in the government's proposals. Discrimination is by definition differential treatment of one group based on group identification. Only the very most blatant forms of discrimination - ads for 'dolly bird', 'cleaner wanted, suitable for mother' etc - will be effectively outlawed while the results of more discreet treatment of women as congenitally irresponsible will be very hard to prove on an individual basis; and the Government is hardly prepared to push it on a general basis. Instead they are setting up a Commission to look into discrimination which from months of evidence given to two select committees, has already been very well looked into.

And yet, the Government have asked for comments on this document, and so it is absolutely vital that we tell them, again and again, what we want. Please send your comments by November 30 to the Government department concerned. They are listed at the back, page 27, or to Spare Rib by Nov. 20.

Rose Ades

CLASSIFIED

■ Sappho Magazine. Published by homosexual women for all women. Monthly 30p inc. post. BCM/PETREL, London WC1V 6XX. Meeting first Monday each month. Upstairs Room, 7.30pm Euston Tavern, Judd St./Euston Rd., London NW1.

■ CONTACTS UNLIMITED. The dating service that always pays personal attention to selecting dates that really appreciate you and your scene. Free questionnaire 01-387 8150 (24 hrs) or 2 Gt. Marlborough St., W.1.

■ HOMOSEXUAL WOMEN in Scotland meet through Scottish minorities group. Write: SMG Women's Group, 11 St Colme St, Edinburgh 3.

■ GAY MAGAZINES: Female/Male (see lists) Johnny: BM/FBGH, London WC1V6XX

■ NUCLEAR TESTING can mean cancer, damaged babies, and war. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament fights against ALL nuclear weapons. Keep in touch by reading *Sanity* - £1 per year. CND, 14 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

■ Help Advisory Service 79 Buckingham Palace Rd., London SW1 828 7495.

■ WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP. While the Workshop is without premises, you can write to them at 22 Great Windmill Street, London W1, or ring the Kingsgate Place Women's Centre at 01-624 1952.

■ ANTI-APARTHEID NEWS describes what life is like in Vorster's South Africa, carries news of the liberation struggle in South Africa, Rhodesia, Namibia and Portugal's African colonies, exposes British collaboration with apartheid - and involves you in the fight against it. 10 issues a year. Membership of the ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT (which includes subscription to AA NEWS), £2 pa: subscription only, 75p pa. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St., London W.1. Tel 01-580-5311

■ GAY GIRL, 30, slightly butch seeks femme for lasting friendship Hants/Dorset. Box No. 171.

■ VERY LONELY GIRL (22) has male psyche but not exclusively gay, needs friends for correspondence/relationship. Box No. 172.

■ FEMINIST 2 sons (7 and 10) needs house to share with like minded woman, north London. Box No. 173.

■ anti-*XMAS CARDS* (including WL theme) SAE to BS, 6 Stanstead Grove, London SE6.

■ ONE WOMAN EXHIBITION of symbolic paintings and drawings by Brenda H. Bridges, Vaughan College, Leicester. 26th November - 14th December.

■ LEFT WING, folkie, gardener girl, 24, needs new roof very fast. W4'ish. 59 Chiswick Rd., W4.

■ NORTHAMPTON Gay Women's Social Group is open to new members. Box No. 174.

■ Please would the person who sent in

the ad Girl, 23, Gay, semi recluse, contact Spare Rib.

■ ESTABLISHED, NON-CRANKY, happy, active, nice, cheap, urban commune, seeks new long-term member. Phone Bradford 21415.

■ GAY FEMALE, 38, seeks to hear from others for companionship/friendship or whatever you require, age and status immaterial, interests varied. Box No. 175.

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THE HUMAN SIDE OF HUMAN BEINGS

Nov 7 A lecture by Jill Wilkinson on RE-EVALUATION COUNSELLING, a method of Co-counselling in which people help each other overcome the present effects of past distresses
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, WARD STREET GUILDFORD (8 pm)

FOREIGN NEWS

New Rights for Soviet Mothers

The Soviet Council of Ministers has granted working mothers new rights including a full salary while they are absent from work because of pregnancy. Previously, when a working mother left her job temporarily to have a baby, she was paid according to how many years she had worked.

The Council has also increased the number of days working mothers, excluding those who are trade unionists or who work on collective farms, may take off to look after a sick child.

Equality in US Police and Coastguards

New York City women will compete equally with men for jobs as police officers in an examination on December 15. Although candidates who pass the written, physical and mental tests will be subject to intensive screening and will have to fulfil age, education, residence and character requirements, they won't have to be of a minimum height and they won't be appointed on a quota basis.

And the US House of Representatives has approved a bill which would give women equal rights with men in the coastguard, including serving on combat vessels and issuing orders to men of lower rank. The bill is now before the senate.

Honourable Thai Women Boxers

Although women are officially banned from the boxing ring in Thailand, one Tiemboon Intrabutr plans to bring back the female art of fighting as immortalised by Thai Queen Suriiothai who, 250 years ago, took on challengers with her bare hands. In fact, Mr. Intrabutr is sending a team, of the best Thai women boxers to tour in the Far East. As he puts it, 'I am seeking a way to promote women in an honourable field. It is much better for a girl to earn her living like this than by being a prostitute.' Maybe he has a point.



Bikini Licence

25-year-old former graduate school instructor Wendy Berlowits determined to have the state of New Mexico's indecent exposure law ruled unconstitutional. So she went along to a public park and proceeded to auction off her bikini top for 77 dollars. She thought she'd proved her point when the police turned up and arrested her for - peddling bikini tops without a licence. It's too much.

'Castration Drug': Second Instalment

In a recent issue we ran a story about a drug that effectively castrates a man. Because of the interest readers have shown, Stephanie Norris has been making inquiries about how exactly the drug works, where it's being used and what for.

If there's one thing that brings women - liberated and unliberated alike - together, it's the fear of rape, or sexual assault. But the occurrence of sexual crime may become a lot less frequent with the arrival of cyproterone acetate, a drug which has the effect of reducing the male sexual libido. Cyproterone acetate is produced by a West German company called Schering Chemicals; the Medical Director of its UK branch, Dr. Pitchford, told me that the drug is a double-action anti-androgen (the male sex hormone): it blocks off the target sites of the male sex hormone and suppresses the activity of the pituitary gland, which controls production of androgen. Cyproterone acetate is intended to be used, according to Dr. Pitchford, for the treatment of any condition where excessive amounts of the male sex hormone are being produced, such as a psycho-sexual disorder or hypersexuality. Currently, Schering Chemicals market the drug in West Germany and Switzerland; I asked Dr. Pitchford if the company was also selling it in Britain, and was told that cyproterone acetate is presently under consideration by the Committee for the Safety of Medicines.

The Swiss and West Germans use the drug on male sex criminals and men undergoing psychiatric therapy for hypersexual conditions. It's been reported that the Australian Minister of Health has approved in principle the testing of cyproterone acetate on imprisoned sex offenders, but Dr. Pitchford 'doesn't know much about that.' In addition, several European countries, among them Austria and the UK, have experimented with the drug as a treatment for prostate cancer, excessive hair growth on women and precocious puberty. I wonder when we're going to catch on to what Switzerland and West Germany are doing with cyproterone acetate.

Miss Universe, Nixon and Peace

When Margarita Moran won the title of Miss Universe in Athens earlier this year, she was quoted as saying that President Nixon is the greatest man in the world.

President Nixon has now thanked her in a letter (sent to her father) for her 'thoughtful comment on my effort to bring peace in the world.' He sounds a little aggrieved.

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NEWS

No shelter in Shelter

Despite Shelter's many commendable achievements the fact remains that there are now more homeless people than when the campaign started.

Since the appointment, at the end of last year, of Geoffrey Martin as Shelter's third Director, the National Campaign for the Homeless has been in a state of upheaval. The last edition, before its editor resigned, of SIN (the Shelter internal news letter) in the week ending 7th September, listed 40 members of staff who have left since Mr Martin's appointment.

Many of the local supporters did not involve themselves in the well-reported disputes in the Spring, when Shelter staff went on strike on the grounds that Mr Martin was 'contributing only to sapping the drive, initiative and high morale of the staff'. While Mr Martin's way of doing things caused unease, many hoped that the end would justify the means, and that once he had his 'small and highly professional staff who can bring pressure to bear on MPs and local councillors', he would earn our respect by mounting a determined and hard-hitting campaign on behalf of the homeless. Mr Martin announced his democratisation proposals on the 1st June in a letter to some Shelter groups. Bruce Kenrick, one of Shelter's founders, made much of them in an article in the 'Guardian' on 11th June last: "No longer will decisions be made by one man sitting in isolated splendour in a London office . . . It is becoming a truly national campaign in which decisions will be made by a National Campaign Committee - some 20 from Shelter groups throughout Britain, 5 staff (at least 3 from outside London), 2 committee and the new Director, Geoff Martin" (sic).

Offer of democracy

On 9th August Mr Martin sent another letter to the groups, informing them that groups' detailed replies to his letter of 1st June had been analysed.

There was no indication in the letter of 1st June that this was going to be done; he had simply said that he looked forward to receiving groups' comments. Certainly some groups had no idea that they were being asked to vote on the democracy issue. Others never even received the June 1st letter, nor even that of 9th August. Mr Martin, however, apparently accepted 79 replies from a total of some 400 - 500 groups as adequate to determine whether or not democracy would be 'granted'. The Board of Management adjusted its offer of 'democracy' in the light of the views expressed by these 79 groups (in fact, of these, 21.25% opposed the idea altogether, and 21.25% specifically supported the idea.) Now, they proposed, voluntary supporters would be represented on the Board as follows:

"2 Shelter supporters, selected by the Board from a list of group members recommended to the Board by the Director."

During the last few months, several opportunities have occurred for Mr Martin to speak out forcefully for the homeless; the Minister of housing was circulating a 'draft circular' to

local authorities about the proposed amendment to Section 21(1) of the 1948 National Assistance Act. This amendment will remove the duty on local authorities to provide accommodation for the homeless in their areas; a tragic fire in a bed and breakfast hotel accommodating homeless families, ought to have provided an excellent opportunity for action to be urged on the implementation of the 1971 Fire Precaution Act; a case was fought in the High Court on the rights of the homeless for temporary accommodation to be provided by local authorities. To the discomfort of Shelter supporters, Mr Martin seemed to be maintaining an uncanny silence. When I asked him why there had been nothing from Shelter in the press during this period, he told me that it wasn't opportune!

Shelter seemed to be in danger of becoming the National Home for the Campaignless.

On the 8th September, the Guardian carried a report on the dismissal of Ron Bailey, Shelter's Homeless Families Officer, and author of the Penguin Special: 'The squatters'. It was

discovered too, that Mr Martin had gone to Cardiff on 23rd August to sack the Welsh Regional Organiser, Gareth Price, and close the Cardiff office. This office serves the whole of Wales. Because of his concern for those who approach the Cardiff office for help, and who Mr Martin ruled, would have to go through the Bristol office in future, Gareth signed an agreement to leave by the end of November, on the understanding that the office would remain open until then. This was the latest example of Mr Martin's failure to demonstrate that concern for the homeless, which puts the Shelter workers he conflicts with, at such a disadvantage in their negotiations with him.

Failure to utilise its assets

The cumulative effect of all this on Shelter groups was disastrous; fund raising activities were being cancelled and some groups were quietly folding up. The Dunstable group, disheartened by Shelter's Head Office's continuing failure to equip them to help those with housing problems and its unwillingness to even advise them on what to do about these cases - had decided to disaffiliate. They wrote first to Mr Martin about this and other problems, but felt that his reply just did not indicate that he understood the appalling situation in which they found themselves. This must be seen as a clear indictment of Shelter's inexplicable slowness in not taking steps sooner to train those members of Shelter groups wanting to offer housing advice and aid. A successful pilot course, designed to give group members these skills, had been held at SHAC at the beginning of the year. By now there should be a definite training programme.

Shelter has consistently failed to utilise its major asset: the

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voluntary, committed, unpaid, concerned individuals who have waited and requested in vain to be enabled to maximise their potential to influence the housing situation in their local setting, and to dynamise the national campaign by taking a real part in formulating its objectives and strategy. One would think that the trustees would be delighted at the evolution of local groups to a stage where they are ready and eager to participate in the management of the campaign, but this vital grass roots force has been frustrated. The trustees seem to have misinterpreted this healthy sign of a campaign growing in strength for a subversive, anarchic movement.

Despite Shelter's many commendable achievements, the distressing fact remains that there are now more homeless people than when the campaign started.

Urban-aid

Two disillusioned group secretaries have written to all Shelter groups stating their strong concern about the way the campaign is now run, and inviting them to support the resolution requesting the Director's resignation. This resolution already has the support of some of Shelter's most dedicated and old-established supporters. They include; the Oxford Shelter Group which was formed a year after the Campaign started in 1966, and which helped set up the first Shelter Family Help Service in November 1971.

Georgina Cox, Secretary of the Wandsworth Group, which also supports the call for Mr Martin's resignation, and who wrote a paper for Shelter in 1971; "The Circle of Despair, a study of the ways in which the London Boroughs discharge their responsibility towards the homeless, and its possible effect on future developments in London" - said: "groups were prepared to bear with Mr Martin at the beginning because Shelter needed a change of direction and he seemed to be a man who could offer certain changes; but, in fact, this hasn't proved to be the case. On the basis of his performance to date, and if he continues as Director, he will do the Campaign irreparable harm."

The trustees hold in trust not just the funds raised for the homeless, but the backing and goodwill of the Campaign's supporters. We sincerely hope that they fully appreciate their great responsibility in cherishing that support and allowing it, at last, full expression.

Pat Krett, Founder member, St Albans Shelter Group.

'More than somebody's wife..' Watergate women

Just before the resumption of the Senate Watergate hearings at the end of last month, former US Attorney-General John Mitchell left his wife Martha. It has been reported that he walked out on her because of her tantrums and that he was trying to persuade her to undergo psychiatric treatment. 'A goddamned lie,' said Martha, whose version is that the marriage broke up because her husband, currently awaiting trial for the part he played in President Nixon's re-election campaign, had lived like a recluse since the Watergate affair broke.

It doesn't really matter who's right: the point is that Watergate has devastated the Mitchells' life together. It has also shrunk John Mitchell from one of the most senior men in the Nixon Administration into a political outlaw. Curiously, though, Watergate has worked the opposite way on Martha Mitchell, making her into a national media figure. I suppose you could say it's liberated her. Certainly she's come a long way from the southern-belle lawyer's wife she was at one time.



Mrs. Ehrlichman

What about the other White House women whose men are out front in the Watergate show - Joanne Haldeman, Jeanne Ehrlichman, the glamorous Maureen Dean? Well, there has been little about them in the press other than that they have suffered the inevitable invasion of privacy: Gail Magruder found that despite a new, ex-directory telephone number, reporters rang her late at night and pestered her with questions. And some friends don't come round any more: as



Mrs. Dean

one former employee of the Committee for the Re-election of the President says, 'If you ever knew anybody these days, a link is attempted. There is so much paranoia and guilt by association.' So the Haldemans and the Ehrlichmans put their Washington houses on the market and the Magruders escaped over here for the summer. Otherwise, most of the working wives have stuck to their jobs while their husbands are spending more time than they have in years doing household chores.

Of all the White House women spotlighted by Watergate, 28-year-old Maureen Dean has attracted the attention of the media more than any other except, of course, Martha Mitchell. Like her husband, Maureen Dean presents a glossy, jet-setting image which makes good television viewing. But who exactly is she? The few reports

about her background conflict: *Time* magazine simply says that Maureen Dean is a former insurance saleswoman from Los Angeles; another source that she was at one time an air stewardess and that before she became John Dean's wife last year she was married to a Californian who died in a car crash. Asked in an interview what had kept him going during his five days' ordeal before the Senate Watergate committee, John Dean replied 'Mo's love has been one of the greatest sources of strength.' But Watergate has provided Maureen Dean, as well as Martha Mitchell, with the opportunity to be more than somebody's wife. She is to



The Haldemans

appear on the American National Broadcasting Corporation's singer Dinah Shore Show. I look forward to reading about her under her own name instead of her husband's.

Stephanie Norris

"... came upon the 100 Jewish girls whom we had seen outside Einheit Drei camp when they had been about to dig tank traps ... I gave her a bar of chocolate and some cigarettes and finally I took my German jackboots off and handed them to her."

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BOOKS ETC.

Red Rag

Issue no.5 of 'Red Rag' is now available. Articles include:

'Playground Politics'; 'the patter of tiny contradictions' (on the Childrens Community Centre at 123 Dartmouth Park Hill); 'Sexuality and Submission'; 'When is a wage not a wage?' (on the Wages for Housework demand); and 'Striking Progress 1972 - 1973' (documentation of women confronting their employers in a calendar of women's strikes, which includes a breakdown of the issues precipitating the strike action.)

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EVENTS

Women in Science

Judith Walker of B.S.S.R.F. will be talking about women and science at



Room 342, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering, Imperial College, Exhibition Road, London SW7 Tuesday November 15 7.30 pm

Tout va bien

If you want to challenge Jean-Luc Goddard on his views expressed in 'Letter to Jane' he will be presenting his recent film 'Tout va bien' and talking about his work in general at the Mounthatten Theatre in the Southampton College of Technology on Saturday, November 3 at 7.30 pm

Women's Festival

Any women interested in the creative and intellectual aspects of visual arts, and the organisation of a weekend women's festival please come to a meeting on

SHORTLIST

November 3rd at 11 am or contact the Festival committee at the South London Womens Centre, 14 Radnor Terrace, S.W.

EXHIBITIONS

A Portrait of Mrs Spinks.
Morley Gallery, Westminster Bridge Road, London.
November 1st - 24th.

Mrs Spinks is 73: she spent most of her life in service, cleaning and doing domestic work. One day, about 6 years ago, Mrs Spinks answered an ad. for a cleaner. Her new employer was Eleanor Brooks. Eleanor began to paint Mrs Spinks, and now, 6 years later, Eleanor Brooks'

exhibition of pictures, sculptures and photographs all of Mrs Spinks are to be shown.

Accompanying the pictures in the gallery, there will be a tape recording of Mrs Spinks talking about her life and experiences. Talking about a friend 'His mother used to make envelopes, a shilling for two thousand, and he used to put them on a barrow and take them over Waterloo Bridge and a horse and cart was coming over and knocked him down and broke his leg, so his mother and father got compensation for this he didn't, and that night him and his two sisters waited and waited and

waited and a policeman come up and said 'You'd better come up the police station, your Mum and Dad's in there'. He said 'they're both dead drunk'.

It sounds as though this exhibition would be totally patronising. In fact, it's done with real innocence and sincerity. Eleanor, who works as an art teacher in a London School and four nights a week at Borstal, admits that the idea of the exhibition is on many levels patronising. *I had no specific idea in mind when I started, I was fascinated in Mrs Spinks, in her life. Through working with her she no longer exists within any class terms for me, she's an individual with her own story to tell.*

R.B.

Brenda H. Bridges

November 26 - December 14

A one woman exhibition of symbolic paintings and drawings by Brenda H. Bridges is taking place at Vaughan College, Leicester.

Kate Barnard

November 3 - December

An exhibition of Kate Barnard's work (drawings and



Eleanor Brooks making the model of Mrs Spinks.

Mrs Spinks.



Mrs Spinks watching TV. The room is an exact replica of one she used to live in and entirely made up of cardboard.

paintings) spanning the last three years is being held at the Usher Gallery Lincoln. The film made of her work by the Yorkshire Arts Association will be screened. ►

City Art Project

The Southern Arts Association invites proposals from artists whose work could involve the exploration of outdoor sites in Portsmouth & Southsea and who might respond to these sites with:

1. Permanent sculpture built to withstand public exposure and weather for a period of six months.
2. Less permanent pieces built to invite public use, participation, play etc.
3. Photographic or other projects describing and exploring outdoor sites.
4. Events and performances designed as responses to the sites and their public.
5. Designs for walls of buildings within the city (sites to be confirmed).

Sites include Southsea Castle Arena, The Clarence Esplanade, Southsea Common, Broad Street, Victoria Park, and Portsmouth City Museum & Art Gallery. Contact Peter Ibsen, Southern Arts Assoc., Southside Offices, Law Courts, Winchester.

Sculpture at South Hill Park 29 October 1973 to 29 October 1974

One of the chief problems now facing many productive sculptors is that of storage. The accent in most exhibitions is understandably on new work and a piece is shown for only a few weeks or at most months before it is moved into storage and effectively wasted. The public and interested buyers get few opportunities actually to see the work that is being done and for the sculptors space becomes a real problem. *Sculpture at South Hill Park*, Bracknell Park, Berks hopes to provide a creative solution to this dual problem. Peter Stark, Director of South Hill Park, has agreed to open the grounds of the centre for at least a year for an exhibition of work most of which will be drawn from artists' studios and stores. The park will thus act both as a

store for artists' work and as a permanent exhibition site and we hope that after this first year the idea will continue and develop involving new artists and new work.

A permanent open-air exhibition.

Contact Teresa Gledowe,
Southern Arts Assoc.
3rd Floor,
Southside Offices,
Law Courts,
Winchester.

THEATRE

Women's Theatre Festival

Performances start every day at 1.15pm except Saturdays at the Almost Free Theatre 9 Rupert St., London W1, Tel. 485 6224. 8-27 October "Instrument for Love"

by Jennifer Phillips
directed by Liane Aukin.

29 Oct - 17 Nov "The Amiable Courtship of Miz Venus and Wild Bill"

by Pam Gems
directed by Caroline Eves
19 Nov - 1 Dec "Lovefood" by Dinah Brook; "Mal de Mere" by Micheline Wandor
directed by Midge Mackenzie
3 - 22 December "Parade of Cats"

by Jane Wiberly
directed by Sue Todd
Concurrently with this season the Group will be running music and poetry programmes, discussions, film shows and exhibitions of work by women artists.

FILM

Steelyard Blues (X) (Alan Myerson, 1972, US) Jane Fonda, Peter Boyle, Donald Sutherland

We came out of 'Steelyard Blues' still smiling. The film is full of that zany sense of the ridiculous rarely seen outside 'Monty Python'.

A hilariously anti-establishment plot is built around the interaction of three brothers. Frank is the archetypal older brother, conformist and

successful, whose position as district attorney is instantly threatened when his brother Jesse (Velden) erupts from jail. Jesse, played by Donald Sutherland, is an accident prone, compulsive car wrecker, and as anarchic as Frank is authoritarian.

Jesse collects a loony gang of outlaws; his silent guitar playing kid brother, a pickpocket living in a crashed plane, and Eagle - a schizoid personality whose roles range from Marlon Brando to The Human Fly. Jesse tries to include Iris Caine (Jane Fonda) in the gang, but she values the money/independence she is finding as a prostitute, and for a while at least, rejects him.

Don't go to see the movie expecting to see Jane Fonda in an openly politically profound role, but Iris's role is symbolic of the sister's position in relation to a brother's gang. Brainwashed by the feminising process into disapproving of Jesse's hairbrained scheme and needing security, she nevertheless wants to be a tomboy - wants to join the gang. Talking to her Jesse traces his career as an outlaw to his childhood when his hero was Billy The Kid. I had no heroes, as a girl, Iris replies.

Eventually she does join Jesse's gang, partly because she finds that the real corruption lies with the supposedly straight Frank. Needless to say, once with them, she's given a traditional role - she does the decor for the getaway plane.

Music by Paul Butterfield and Nick Gravenites.
R.P.

Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid.

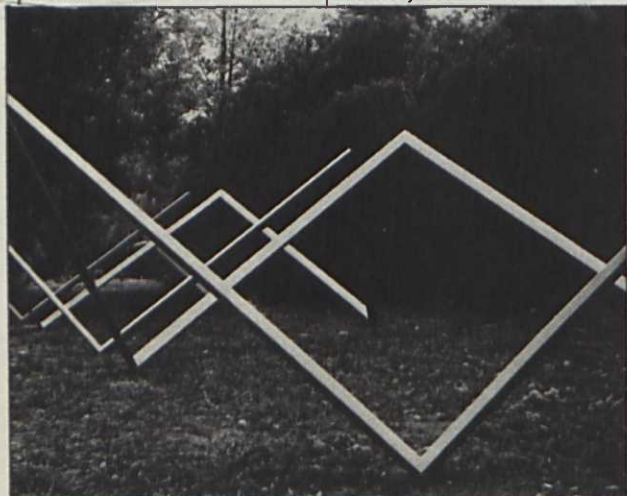
Bob Dylan. CBS

Film by MGM Cert.X

It's strange to review a film and a soundtrack, but I heard the record before seeing the film and found it so beautiful in its own right. It was like having a

guitarist in the corner of the flat somewhere, strumming melancholy chords, with flute, harmonica or vocal emphasis now and then. Don't expect it to be 'Dylan's great new album', it would be a mistake to base a comparison on his past LP's. It's mainly instrumental with variations on the main theme which just flows along, evoking sad, musical pictures as it goes. After seeing the film, the musical images have changed to actual scenes. The story is simple: Pat Garrett (James Coburn) was once a close outlaw friend of Billy the Kid (Kris Kristofferson), but Garrett, tired of the fugitive existence and realising that it was becoming a thing of the past, joins the winning side and secures his future by pinning on a sheriff's badge. But in so doing, is forced to track the Kid down. The trail is littered with blood, emotion and sunset landscapes, the scenes are beautifully filmed whilst being heavily dominated by the masculine ethic and code of the West. Bob Dylan is in there using the film as a vehicle to accentuate his weirdness. His first line is a reply to the question 'Who are you?', he blinks several times looking harmless, amused and confused and answers 'That's a good question'. Rita Coolidge is just one of the women who remain in their place, silent and subservient. Emotion pours out of their eyes whilst always knowing that a man gotta do what a man gotta do. Even the violence is immorally beautiful, which I hope means that the film is trying to exaggerate the Western myth to impress upon the audiences the ridiculousness of the whole fantasy. Yes, it's romantic rubbish, but whilst Westerns are still being churned out, Peckinpah and Dylan are the brace of brilliance which will no doubt spell box office success.

M.F.

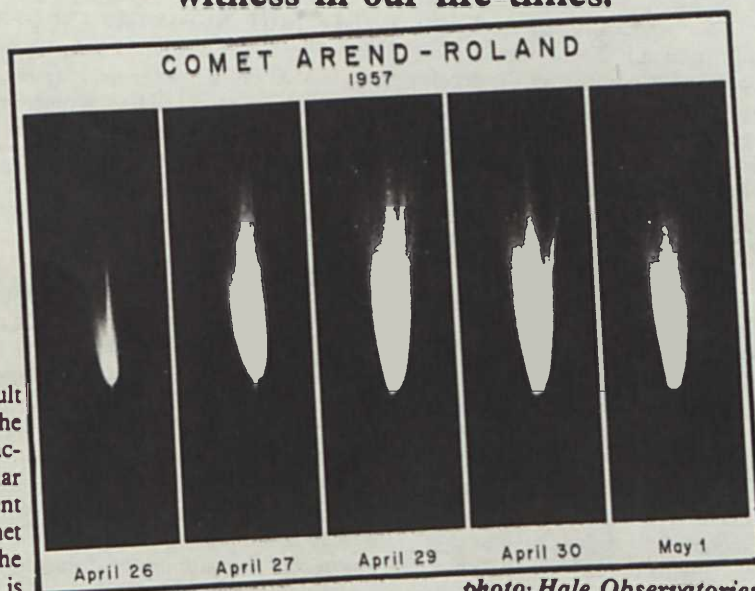


Wendy Taylor's 'Enclave' on exhibition at South Hill Park.



The comet is coming

From November 1973 through January 1974 a great comet will be visible in the skies. Called Comet Kohoutek, after Herr Lubos Kohoutek of Hamburg Observatory who discovered the approaching celestial body on March 7th, 1973, it may well be the most spectacular natural phenomenon any of us will witness in our life-times.



The Sep./Oct. issue of the *Occult Gazette* reports that the approaching comet can be accounted for by the Virgin Solar Helium Fire which is at present feeding the world. The Comet heralds the Pure Nucleus of the Fire, where the true Godhead is going to be made known to one and all.

The latest *New Scientist* says that Comet Kohoutek is now the prime scientific objective of Skylab 4. Launch dates for the next batch of astronauts may well be postponed in order to extend observations of the comet into January. Other spacecraft will also observe the comet: a Mariner vehicle through TV cameras; Pioneer 8 by transmitting radio signals through the comet's tail; Copernicus satellite with spectroscopy to study the temperature and motion of the hydrogen surrounding the cometary coma; and satellite OSO 7 with ultraviolet measurements. Two aircraft equipped with infra-red telescopes, several Aerobee rockets launched by NASA, and radar signals aimed to bounce off the cometary nucleus will also be pursuing the phenomenon.

Best observation periods for casual observers will be late November/early December, and most of January. The naked eye will perceive the comet at night as the second brightest object after the moon, and it will probably be visible in daytime simply by blocking the sun out with your hand.

There have been several people

in here recently asking about the comet. One just this afternoon. "What will be the effect of the comet on our heads? I mean. The cosmic rays."

Another question is: how much money will Patrick Moore get paid by television companies, radio companies, newspaper proprietors, book and magazine publishers, etc. as a result of a chance occurrence millions of miles out of space?

Out beyond the realm of Pluto, according to one theory, on the furthest perimeter of our particular star system, a host of millions of comets is bunched in an orbiting mass known as Oort's Cloud. Each awaiting that one impulse which will edge it from its regular path and eventually send it plunging towards the heart of the solar system.

Scenario 8.

What happens when a comet hits the earth?

You may well ask. In any case, this one won't.

Velikovsky believes that a comet may have been one cause of the vast cataclysms which he claims have shaken the planet in the not too distant past.

Regular astronomers scoff at such ideas.

The earth passed through a

comet's tail in the 19th century. No undue effects were noticed. But you never know. After all, how does one know what kind of effects a comet might have. Maybe it caused the First World War. Maybe it inspired Einstein. Or Freud.

Why have stock exchange prices always risen and fallen once every eleven years; following exactly the same rhythm as sunspots? Why do wheat prices, admissions to lunatic asylums, and accidents in Chicago also follow the same 11-year pattern? Are comets rhythmic?

In all the world's mythologies comets herald disaster and the fall of kings. The appearance of Halley's Comet in 1066 was thus seen to have presaged Harold's fall. Maybe Comet Kohoutek will achieve something similar for Richard Nixon.

All rubbish, the astronomers say, comets are quite simple.

There's a big hole in the middle of Siberia. It happened around 1908. Or 1911. All the trees were flattened for miles around. Was it a vast explosion, and if so, of what? Or was it, as one Soviet scientist suggested, caused by a giant atomic-powered spaceship from outer space? Or should we accept the theory of two

Americans as reported in *Nature* magazine only a few weeks ago, that it was due to the passage of a microscopic black hole through the earth? Why were no meteoric debris found there, or any other clue as to the cause? Was it a comet?

Many things are possible. The world is full of amazing facts, some of them real. Halley's Comet reappears every 76 years, and is next due in 1986. The word comet comes from the Greek 'comiti', meaning long-haired. Jupiter draws in its wake a whole bevy of comets which it has captured through the power of its gravitation. The comet's tail which to us is so spectacular is caused not by the comet's whizzing through space but by constant discharge of minute particles from the sun, known as the Solar Wind. This means that the tail follows the comet as it approaches the sun, and precedes the comet as it retreats. One primitive tribe believes that comets are thunderbolts thrown by angry gods who are fortunately so drunk that their aim is rarely accurate, whilst Mr. Hortace Burrows of 13 Railway Villas, Swindon, believes them to be messages from extra-galactic civilizations.

Michael Marten.

Michael Marten, with 4 other people, is involved in starting the British Catalogue, an index of Possibilities.

A book about the Comet will be published by Wildwood House at the end of November.

BATTERED WOMEN: HOW TO USE THE LAW

A report entitled 'BATTERED WOMEN AND THE LAW' has just been put out on behalf of CHISWICK WOMEN'S AID. It has been prepared by Michael Norton of the Interaction advisory service, Martin Kemp, and Betty Knightly. The report includes a critique of the present legal situation with suggestions for possible reforms and a comprehensive guide to using the law which should be as useful to solicitors as to their clients. I have used the report as the basis for this article, unfortunately I do not have the space to reproduce it all.

A wife who has been beaten by her husband is usually forced to resort to divorce proceedings if she is to have social security benefit for herself and her children or emergency legal aid. Without these she is neither able to support herself economically nor to use the legal system to rehouse her in her own home or protect her against her husband. In most cases councils will not rehouse women unless they start divorce proceedings. The report deplores this situation because, it points out, a woman who is badly shaken up often wants time to consider her position before embarking on a divorce. However, given that this is in practice virtually impossible they have devised a step by step guide to using the law.

FIRST FIND A SOLICITOR:

It is not always easy to find a solicitor who is either able or willing to handle these sort of cases. Many of them have little experience in this area and they often prefer to avoid these cases which can be time consuming, not particularly lucrative and which often interfere with other work because of the speed with which action has to be taken. Chiswick Women's Aid are looking for a solicitor to work full time handling the problems of battered women.

If you do not live near Chiswick Women's Aid you will have to find your own solicitor. First go to a citizens advice bureau who will give you a list of local solicitors; if they are unhelpful you can contact the law society for advice. Remember that if you have no income of your own (or a small one) you are entitled to free legal advice (watch out for a sign in the solicitor's window showing two people at a table) and legal aid. In emergencies you can get *emergency legal aid* - this means that the solicitor will help you fill in a legal aid form and an emergency application form. The two factors that the law society are looking for when they decide about emergency aid, are whether there is already extreme suffering or whether there is likely to be if nothing is done.

The solicitor should mark the application URGENT and telephone the legal aid office before sending it in. He should also be prepared to argue on your behalf if aid is not granted. It should be possible to get a decision from the office within twenty four hours.

NOW THERE ARE FIVE DIFFERENT COURSES OF ACTION OPEN

A) The magistrates court: The wife may take out a 'matrimonial summons for cruelty! This usually means that the husband is fined and bound over to keep the peace. Nothing more can be done to prevent violence recurring, if he does not comply with the order he will simply be fined again. Experience at Chiswick Women's Aid has shown that it is not really advisable to use the magistrates court particularly as magistrates who are usually both male and middle class tend to be extremely patronising and unsympathetic towards battered women. They seem to feel in general that a woman who is beaten must have done something to deserve it, and that (particularly if she is working class) she should be prepared to put up with a bit of rough and tumble as a normal part of married life. They tend to regard the cases as private tiffs and are likely just to indulgently tell the couple to 'kiss and make up'.

B) THE HIGH COURT:

An injunction (a court order preventing harassment) can be taken out against the husband without petitioning for divorce. This is not usually done. The husband is not presumed guilty but if he breaks the injunction he can be imprisoned for contempt of court.

C) POLICE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION:

The police are reluctant to interfere in 'family matters' and in any case injuries must be severe and there must be evidence to prove that the husband was responsible.

D) PRIVATE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION:

This would mean the wife taking action against the husband herself and having him convicted of assault.

E) DIVORCE REGISTRY OR COUNTY COURT:

The wife may petition for divorce or for judicial separation, and at the same time apply for an immediate injunction.

This has been found to be the most successful kind of action because it means that the woman is entitled to legal aid and she can be quickly reinstated in her home, financial arrangements can be made and a degree of legal protection against harassment can be obtained. This is what happens.

PREPARING THE CASE:

The solicitor should contact a barrister and arrange a meeting with you within twenty four hours of your contacting him. At this meeting a statement will be taken. You will need to give the names of possible witnesses, the name of a doctor or hospital who has treated you after an attack and a statement should be written saying that you or your children would suffer unless you are separated from your husband and regain possession of your home.

The barrister will now 'draft a summons for injunction', an 'affidavit' (signed statement) giving your evidence and a petition for divorce. The injunction can cover a number of things, the object is to prevent him from doing anything to hurt, frighten or worry you or your children. It can conclude getting him to leave your home so that you can live there, granting interim custody of the children and arranging money matters.

GOING TO COURT:

The case will go either to the family division of the High Court in London or to a local Divorce County Court. The injunction will be read out and handed to the judge, at the same time the solicitor will promise to issue the divorce petition within twenty four hours. If he is satisfied that the case is serious the judge might grant everything in the injunction immediately, (except vacation of the matrimonial home) even though the husband will not yet have had time to appear in court. A second hearing will be arranged for about a fortnight later and in the meantime the husband will be served with the injunction and the petition.

For the second hearing the solicitor will have to gather evidence against the husband, and he will have a chance to defend himself. On this occasion the temporary injunction may be continued and possession of the matrimonial home should be arranged for the wife.

If the husband does not keep to the terms of the injunction the solicitor should take out an application for a further hearing asking that the husband be sent to prison for contempt of court. After this it is simply a matter of waiting for the divorce proceedings to go through. The time this takes can vary a great deal, particularly if the husband is defending but at least the wife should be economically secure and have a home with the knowledge of legal support should her husband mistreat her in the meantime.

There are no real remedies to this sort of violence within a society which extols strength as the greatest manly virtue and firmly believes that every woman is just waiting for some man to come along and beat her into submission. Heavier sanctions against violent husbands are unlikely to have any real preventative value while James Bond can bring people rushing to the box offices. However this document and the establishment of more 'Women's Aid' centres may be the first step towards protecting women from the effects of an overdeveloped male ego.

Angela Phillips

Much as we may deplore the increasing tendency of mothers of young children to work, it would be unrealistic not to count its economic yields." In case we're tempted to relax now that the government is committed to a programme of nursery education, it's worth remembering that this quote comes from the Plowden Report (1967), which is the basis for Mrs Thatcher's proposals. On this basis, all children under

three, and half the three-year-olds will be left out of the programme, and of those who do get a place, only 15% will be full-time. How did they arrive at 15%? They decided (though they don't tell us how) that 10% of mothers are incapable of looking after their children, and that of all the mothers with children between three and five, only 5% work full-time. Sheer guesswork, and hopelessly inadequate - and the research is already eight years out of date. There is one point at which Plowden and Thatcher disagree: money. Where Plowden proposes £80m, Thatcher proposes £30m - for the same programme.

But where do working mothers fit into this? Even if there were two or three times as many full-time places (and recent research suggests that this is what is needed) the hours are still 9.30 to 4.30 - which are just not long enough for the vast majority of working women. Day nurseries have long hours, but they have long waiting lists too, and in the main only cater for priority hardship cases.

In all this, nothing is said of the kind of education we can expect for our children. Clearly, the demands of women have to be stated again.

As our society is structured at the present time, a mother is generally responsible for the daily activities of her child until the age of five. Many women feel isolated and frustrated in this situation: the only training we receive for this parental role is the experience of our own lives.

Many mothers would like to work, others must for financial reasons - all are faced with the practical burden of arranging for suitable child-care. All are faced with the more intolerable emotional burden of guilt placed on them by a society which has built a myth around motherhood and dumped it on all women regardless of their individuality.

The Womens Liberation Movement has long been aware of these problems and has recognised that the child-care available in this country does not fulfil the needs of most mothers. After much discussion and argument, the demand for free 24-hour nurseries for children from 0 to 5 was formulated for the first women's demonstration in March 1971. 24 hours for women who had to work at night - nurses and cleaners, etc.

This demand proved unrealistic and unworkable.

On March 30th 1971, Camden Council in London held a meeting on Child-Care, two members of the Womens Liberation Movement attended and complained about the existing child-care facilities in Camden. Following this meeting, two women were approached by the Director of Social Services and asked for positive suggestions as to how the problem might be tackled.

With some reservations they agreed to discuss the position among themselves. Several meetings were held with members from twelve North London groups attending.

At these meetings it was decided we would ask the Council to:

A: Supply us with 12 empty short-life houses in redevelopment areas.

B: Renovate these houses.

C: Give us a grant for one full-time worker and running costs for

the house.

We in return would:

A: Organise and run 12 full-time nurseries.

B: Supply free labour on a voluntary rota basis, (in the belief that free education is the right of every child.)

We insisted that the nurseries should be free, and that we should have complete control and autonomy in the running of it and of all activities connected, with the nurseries.

The group felt that the hours the nurseries were open must suit mothers who work full-time. We must be open at least from 8.30 to 6.00pm. We were also anxious that men should be involved, believing that child-rearing is the responsibility of both men and women.

The large group of womens liberation members slowly dwindled to a small core. This group then became involved with local women not in the movement and a working group of 7 was finally formed. This group negotiated with the Council for 18 long and disheartening months. How long can a pre-school child wait?

On 11th May 1971 our proposals were accepted by the Director of Social Services and we started to look for suitable housing.

We chose the Highgate New Town area primarily as it was local to most of us, and several in the group already had contact with the local community. The community was in flux: half the residents had been moved out during the redevelopment, programme, and other homeless families moved in for short stays in condemned houses. So we particularly wanted our Centre to be a caring friendly place for people old and young.

We searched the area and gave the Council long lists of empty houses, many of which they did not know they owned.

Eventually we agreed upon a house, No. 123, Dartmouth Park Hill. We drew up plans for the conversion and had many meetings with the Council about money, organisation, and just getting things started.

At this time we realised that one of our greatest mistakes was never to get any of the Council promises in writing. This made it extremely difficult to put pressure on them as all dates and agreements were verbal - delay followed exasperating delay. Finally we became so frustrated that we wrote them a threatening letter saying that unless we were given a definite completion date we would demonstrate publicly and take our story to the media. The Council outsmarted us by releasing their own press-statement.

However, as a result of our letter we got a completion date of 12th August, also a pledge published in the Daily Mail that we should be rehoused once our house is demolished.

We got the keys in September and were shocked at the state in which the contractors had left the place. Foolishly, we had said we would do the decorating, hoping to get local people involved in this work, so that they would really feel that it was their Centre. The amount of work left for us to do was staggering, and as time was so short and everyone fed up we felt unable to ask for local help.

There followed desperate weeks of carpentry, plumbing, plastering and painting.

We also learnt at this stage that we would not be allowed to accommodate babies.

This was a blow as we felt strongly that mothers of very young children desperately need a few hours to themselves during the week.▶

NOT SO MUCH A DAY NURSERY..

The first child-care centre funded by a local council was set up in no.123 Dartmouth Park Hill, London. Here the group explain how they negotiated with the council, the difficulties they surmounted, and the day to day running of the centre.

More weeks of ordering, organising and buying equipment followed. Finally, on December 4th 1972, we opened.

The Centre is run in a 4-storey house with a flat at the top occupied by a mother and child. We have discovered several good things about having a Centre for children in a house rather than a church-hall or a purpose-built nursery school. First the children can relate to the size of the rooms and it is more like their own homes. Secondly it is flexible. We can change things around if we like, paint it how we (and the kids) want it, use it in the evenings and weekends and what's more, both of us - kids and grown-ups - feel that it's OUR Centre, it doesn't belong to the church or the education authority.

We have separate rooms for different activities, namely an art room (paint, clay, water-play, cutting and pasting), imaginative play room (house corner, dressing up, building materials), "quiet" activities room and eating room (books, table toys), sleeping room and office.

We were given £15000 initially to equip the Centre throughout, and managed to get several things second-hand or free; and we get £3000 a year running costs, to include salaries of the paid workers. We have one qualified full-time worker and one part-time worker, both having experience with pre-school children, and a cleaner worker in the evenings, all of them having been chosen by us.

There is a rota of people who work at the Centre consisting of paid workers, parents who are able to give time and volunteers who do not have children at the Centre but who want to work there. We have actively encouraged men to work on the rota if they can and there are now four who do. We have found that they are capable of doing more than just mending the toys, but they have often felt unsure of themselves, and it's been hard for them entering a world

where to date, women are a majority and have more experience.

The children are being cared for by, and are learning from, a group of people, not just a single parent or teacher, in a stimulating and loving environment. This allows a much greater range of experiences and relationships for the child than the often stifling and exclusive mother-child bond, and enables us to care for our children together in a supportive situation where problems can be shared. It also means that we have more time of our own to work if we want or have to, and to develop ourselves in other ways. Both the children and the grown-ups are benefiting from the collective care of our children.

There is a journal written daily in which the events, progress and problems of the day are recorded, plus any other information or

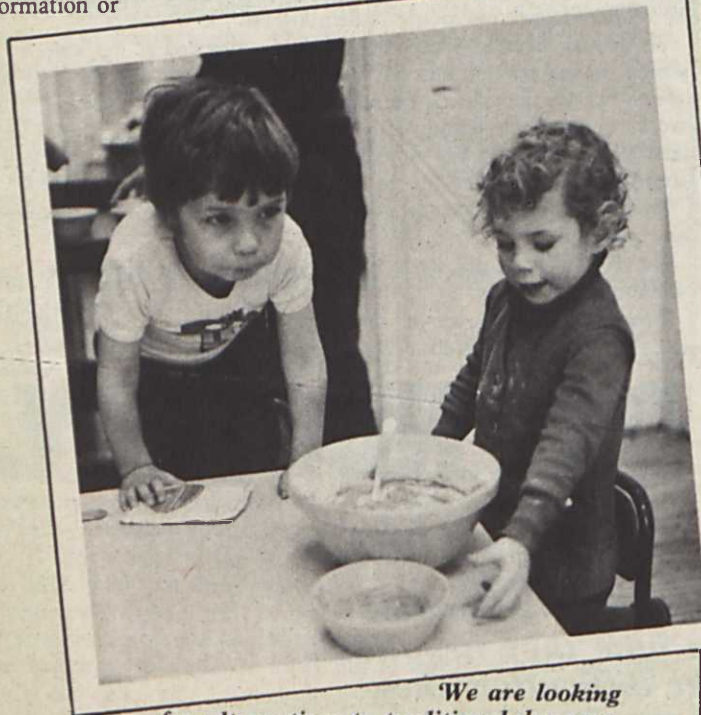
questions one wants to pass on to others. This means that parents who usually work at the Centre once a week can read it and find out what has been happening on other days. It is also very useful as a record of the children and the Centre, and we have been able to trace changes and developments since we began. Anyone who wants to can write in it, and writing in it makes you really think about what has happened.

There are 21 children who come to the Centre, but only 15 at any one time because of space limitations. Some are at the Centre all day, some only in the morning or the afternoon, and the age range is two to five years. Six of the children who come are those of the original organisers, but our priority now is to take children from the immediate neighbourhood.

We are open from 8.30 until 6pm to meet the needs of those parents who have full-time jobs and therefore cannot work on the rota. Some of the parents have part-time jobs and others work at home (housework and care of babies). Both of the latter are expected to work on the rota. There is always a wholesome meal midday plus morning and afternoon snacks, and the younger children sleep in the afternoon if they want to.

Many of us are trying to work out different ways of relating to children. We don't want to be authorities always telling them what to do and commenting on whether they are good or bad. We want to recognise them as human beings and to treat them as such. There are many ways in which we have been attempting to turn these ideas into practice and to translate the theory into something more than words and hot air. We encourage the children to be independent and to do as much for themselves as they can and we have been continually surprised at how capable they are. The lunch time procedure is a good example of this. They serve themselves from central bowls on the table, pour their own drinks (and wipe up the spills!), clear away their own dishes and collect their own dessert from the kitchen. In the beginning we all had to restrain ourselves from always doing things for them, although it may be quicker and cleaner to do so in the short term. It took a great deal of thought, trial and error before things ran anything like smoothly and we are still learning. We had to buy jugs that they could handle easily, bowls that they could see into, and we are trying to get child size brooms that really work so that they can sweep up afterwards and not just 'play' at sweeping in the house corner.

All the toys and most of the art materials are on open shelves at child height so that the kids can always help themselves to things they want to use and they are encouraged to put things back when they have finished with them. The basic activities mentioned earlier are always available, but in addition we plan special activities around a weekly theme, in order to increase the number of different experiences we can offer the children. Examples of themes include living things, colour, how things work, shape and size, the senses,



'We are looking for alternatives to traditional day care of young children. We want to bring up our children to be self-sufficient but caring people who can relate to each other co-operatively not competitively. We want our children of both sexes to grow up with equal opportunities and not to be stereotyped into sex roles.'



As Sue says, 'Sometimes I think we're working with a group of beautiful, lively, extroverted, sensitive children. I just hope they'll find school and the rest of the world as exciting after they leave here.'

printing etc. Whenever possible we go out with the children to try and link what they experience at the Centre with the world outside. The same local park can illustrate colour one week and plants the next. Having a theme helps to bring continuity from one day to another and it also makes us feel more secure when we work at the Centre if we know there are activities planned. One day the kids painted the leaves of the runner beans we were growing in the yard, bright red and yellow, and were terrifically pleased with the result. A few weeks later they saw that the leaves died because the sun and air couldn't get to them. They learnt something, but even so they will probably do it again!

Whenever possible we try to involve the children in everything that happens at the Centre. They help to shop for the food, they go to the laundrette to do washing, they help in preparation of food (cutting up fruit, grating cheese, making rice pudding or jelly) they put out chairs and set the tables. It does not always run smoothly. They don't always want to do it. But on the whole they respond to responsibility and appear to thrive on it. Grown ups are always available to help them, to talk to them, to cuddle and love them and very often they comfort and hug each other. They are encouraged to help and care for one another and to be aware of each other's needs. This can be done in many small but important ways e.g. asking them to help each other on and off with coats, pointing out when another child is crying and asking them why they think she is crying, noticing when children are away and discussing where they might be. It isn't happening overnight, but we do believe things are changing and the kids are growing more sensitive to one another and are better able to work together, asking each other for help rather than always asking the adults. Like the adults they are learning that things get easier when they are shared.

Here parents can voice any anxieties or suggestions they may have about their children - not, as it were, to a group of 'professionals', but to a group made up largely of other parents, who know their children and work with them, and whose children in turn are known to all. So discussion is based, not on asking the advice of experts, but on the exchange of experience and common problems. How does the child relate to other children in the Centre? Or to brothers, sisters or parents? What happens in the home or out shopping? Has the child changed since coming to the Centre, or do the parents have difficulty in relating their behaviour there to their behaviour in the home?

Not all parents are used to handling a lot of children at once, and many of us feel the need to discuss some of the problems we encounter. In the meeting there's the opportunity to learn from each other as a group - from successes and failures - and of basing our learning on our practice, and vice versa.

The meeting, in fact, is fundamental to the organisation of the Centre. In a situation where most parents work, there is no other regular opportunity for all to get together. It's not just a question of 'participating' in the running of the Centre - the parents run it, and the meeting is the place where the policies and daily routines are worked out.

Subjects for discussion include children's books, and the almost insoluble problem of finding ones which don't cast children into the old stereotypes. Or aggression among the children: should they be left to fight it out, or should we intervene? And if so, at what stage? And what do the children expect of us? Or again, the problem of sex-roles: if a girl *wants* to do the washing up and help with the food, why shouldn't she? But if she monopolises these activities, will she be preventing a boy from learning? On other occasions we've used films - i.e. other people's ideas about child-care - to stimulate our own discussions.

We don't want to make it sound as if we don't have problems: we do. There are personal and political differences between people, as in all groups, and we can't claim that everyone in the neighbourhood looks favourably on us. Many older residents, who were forced to bring up their children without free facilities of any kind, are understandably resentful.

It's not always easy for new parents coming into the Centre to

We believe that girls and boys should have the same opportunities. We do not want the girls to be always in the house corner with the dolls preparing for motherhood while the boys are enjoying rough and tumble games in the yard. We interest the boys in doing traditionally female things like cooking and setting tables and encourage girls to hammer nails and saw wood, although no-one is forced to do anything.

We don't want our children to be channelled into very rigid roles according to their sex which would limit their choices now and continue to do so all their lives.

One of the central problems of education is contact between home and school. In one sense, we have no problem - the workers are employed by the parents, and are hardly likely to exclude them. But how to relate what goes on in the Centre to what goes on in the home? The weekly Sunday meeting provides an essential link. As a rule, one or two children are discussed each week - people are notified beforehand, and the discussion only takes place if the parent or parents of the child are there.



Discussion about whether to allow the kids who are putting water in their food - and everyone else's - at mealtimes to continue, or whether to take away their water, or everybody's, or what. Some wanted to observe behaviour to see whether kids were expressing creative or emotional needs, others saw it as playing up and wanted a few simple rules. Discussing the water in the food issue we discovered that behaviour upset almost every adult whose reasons varied from: 'Well then I can't finish his lunch for him' to 'Food is not a toy' to 'Instinctively it annoys me but then I think my reaction is a little overstated. It's his food after all.'



**Laura Mulvey
looks into
Penelope Slinger.**

Is there feminine phantasy? Penny Slinger's recent exhibition *Opening* at the Angela Flowers gallery provided graphic images of phantasy which only a woman could have produced. The whole question of phantasy is crucial for women: until women can confront their own unconscious phantasies, as long as they continue to be captivated by those of men, they will be out of touch with the content of their own minds and victims of the repression which allots them their place in society even to their own satisfaction. From a theoretical point of view, the argument for the existence of a separate and distinct realm of female phantasy is strong.

Children are not born *sexed* with an innate psychological tendency to masculinity or femininity. The concept of the Oedipus complex, produced by Freud, explains how children acquire a sexual identity and from it derive the great, initial complex of phantasies through which, as a kind of second mutilated birth, a child takes its place in human society and succumbs to its pattern of repression. Yet, however strong this repression, phantasy persists in the traces of an unconscious desire and, as the

experience of the Oedipus complex varies essentially for male and female, so do the phantasies which accompany it.

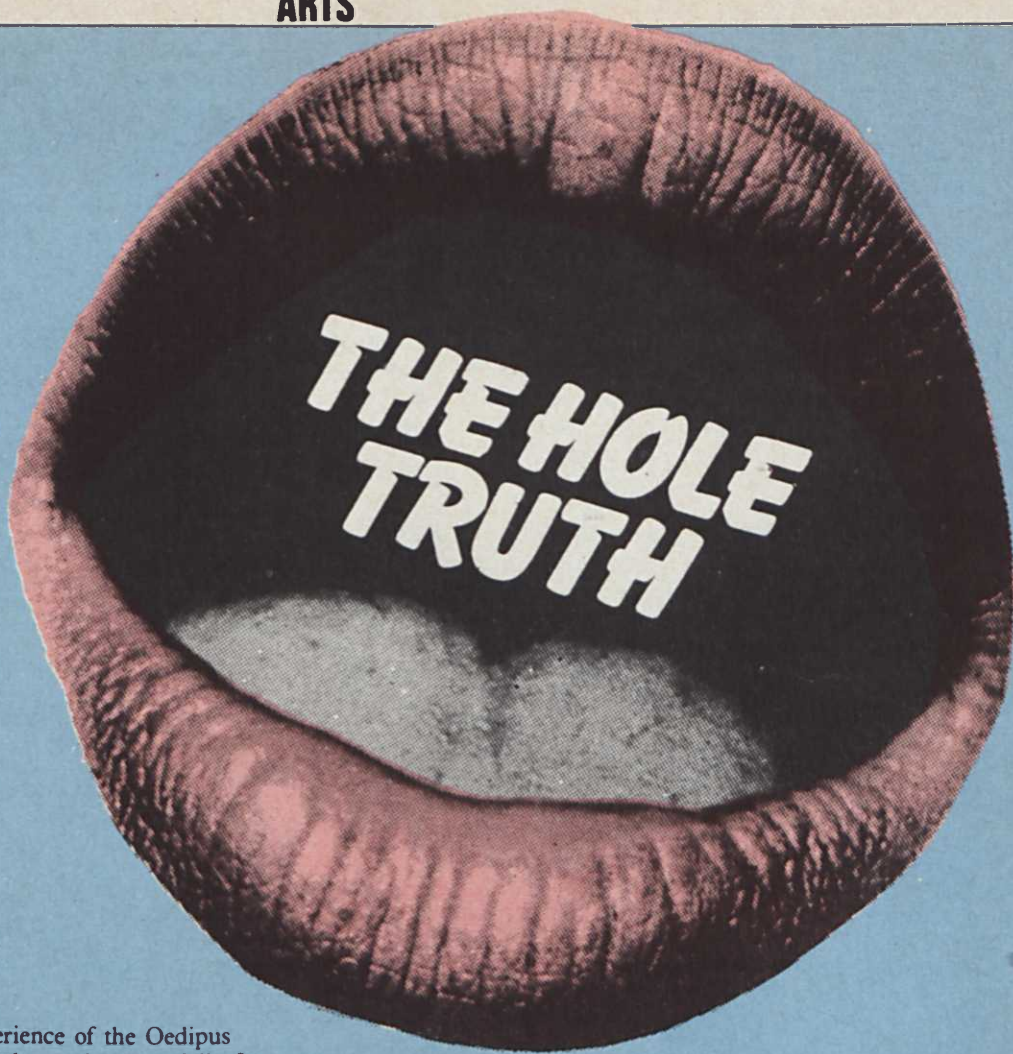
Very much in the tradition of the Surrealists, who first consciously attempted to fight

repression by making phantasy and dream into the discourse of art, Penny Slinger explores the workings of the mind, using sexuality not just to portray its conventional surface but to express the hidden desires and fears which warp and govern it. Her work is elliptical, and in circling round her subject she gradually encompasses it, so that all the objects in the exhibition were inter-related by means of puns, allusions and analogies. None of them could be looked at in isolation. In the Surrealist tradition, the exhibition should have been seen as an event with a discourse rather than a display of art objects. It is a continuation of their campaign to break down the barriers between unconscious and conscious. But whereas the Surrealists showed little interest in feminine phantasy, *Opening* showed us how powerfully a woman is able to transform Surrealism.

Opening was conceived around the theme of food and orality. It is arguable that orality (libidinal fixation on the mouth) has a particular significance for women. In the Freudian concept of phases of sexual development, the oral phase, which is the first, is dominated by the mother. It is the phase in which the child's main need is for food and its main pleasure is in receiving nourishment. Traditionally this

pleasure has been provided by the mother. For both sexes the mother is the first love-object. Freud, as he struggled unsatisfactorily with the female Oedipus complex, considered the change of affection for women to heterosexuality one of the main problems. A girl's first attachment is the *homosexual* attachment to her mother, which cannot be totally dissolved.

The exhibition included objects made up in the form of meal tables, three enormous dummy wedding cakes, as well as collages of mouths and a series of assemblages of mouths in boxes. The catalogue, written in the form of a menu, provides an ironic guide to the feast and its symbolism. One of the wedding cakes, titled *Happy Anniversary*, opens to reveal a doll's house, arranged in three tiers as kitchen, dining room and bathroom, an image of oral domesticity. Photographic collages use the same symbol, but differently. A woman is encased in a wedding cake, as though it was a bra and corset, from which a young groom is cutting a slice, wielding an enormous knife which later turns into an erect penis. The "well-known, worn out, emotionally loaded icon" of the cake is used in a variety of ways to explode the false repressive ritual of the wedding feast. The ▶



Happy Anniversary

BRIGHT OUTLOOK FOR BRIGHTON EXHIBITION

Plans are slowly evolving for an exhibition of women's work in Brighton. Pen Dalton read about the Womanpower exhibition in London. She writes, "I was excited to find out that I was not really alone in what I was doing and thought that it would be more effective if I could get other women to join with me to present a strong feminist show."

She has several possible sites in

mind and the Gardner Arts Centre has expressed interest. A group is building up around organising the show but plans are still in their early stages.

She would like women to send slides of their work to her, and she will arrange for them all to meet to see each other's work and to discuss the exhibition.

Contact Pen Dalton, 31 Park Street, Brighton, Sussex■

From 50% *The Visible Woman*



Pandora's box

mouths left trailing loose".

The imagery and depth of reference of *50% The Visible Woman* is amazingly rich and unrelenting and I have only been able to suggest a fraction of it. The very last image in the book is of a woman-man, a hermaphrodite. Called a "compromise to form a solution", it tries to resolve the dilemmas of the birth trauma, the relationship with the mother, the Oedipus complex and the vicissitudes of female development through a phantasy image, a disavowal rather than an affirmation of femininity. Nevertheless the book as a whole constitutes a challenge both to the repressive society whose essence it reveals and to women themselves. It is a revelation of how little female phantasy has been explored and how its importance does not lie simply in an up-beat positive discovery of a hidden, better self. Penny Slinger shows that the necessary process of facing feminine sexuality head on is not easy.

"There are so many layers to pare away".

Her concept of art is similarly uncompromising. She conceived of *Opening* not just as a traditional gallery show but as a genuine opening of her own mind and life and, hopefully, of the minds and lives of those who participated in the experience. The event should have been accompanied by an act of consumption: a banquet or a burning. On the last day Penny Slinger had planned to burn the objects that were left, but that morning brought news of the Summerland fire. The project of showing her work consumed by flames in itself symbolized a letting go of their value both as objects and as her metaphoric children. In her words also, "the literal fire is only a symbol of the inner fire of concentration." She is now working on another book, her autobiography, a mode of pro-creation and display which avoids the over-valuation of object art and does not demand its own destruction■

triad of corset, home and cake form an image of imprisonment. The cutting of the cake conveys both the husband's sexual possession of the woman and his castration of her in phantasy. Finally the woman is both passive object of consumption and active, but desexualized, provider of food.

Other imagery interlocks food with sexuality, using fruit as symbolic of the female genitals, the pleasure and beauty of food enhancing by analogy the image of the vulva. While the phallus has been eternally celebrated, glorified and revered, female sexual symbolism has been correspondingly neglected. Penny Slinger's exhibition is full of images of mouths, which have a sexual significance of their own, and also function as metaphors for the vagina. The mouth is an active organ which both eats and produces speech, although it consists mainly of a concave hole. The suggestion of the mouth-vagina metaphor is that the vagina also is active, not passive as is traditionally thought. It both incorporates the penis (the vagina, unlike the penis, is muscular) and is productive in childbirth. The very exquisite red lips of the collage series are open wide, exposing a variety of organs (male and female) inside the mouths as well as symbolically charged items of food, ambiguously items to be eaten, sucked or kissed or part of the apparatus of the mouth itself. There is a tension between the power and strength of the woman's mouth (vagina) and the familiar female destiny as object for consumption.

A second theme in the exhibition was that of birth and death, womb and tomb. Many of the objects are constructed to be looked into like boxes, another implication of the word *Opening*. One is a womb with a lid to be lifted off, another is a coffin (*Is There Life After Birth?*). A second womb-coffin (*Spider*) combines the morbid atmosphere of decay and decomposition with the dark depth and mystery of the womb, concentrated round the image of a spider, the mother which devours its young. Finally, the images of the corpse and the meal are connected through the image of the sacrificial altar, site both of ritual death and ritual food.

Penny Slinger has also published a book, *50% The Visible Woman*, which consists of photographic collages and words. The words, like poems at times, are printed on alternate transparent pages in front of the pictures, arranged so that they

are related visually to the collages. As in the exhibition, the text of the book is woven together through a rich network of puns and allusions, both visual and verbal, and much of the same symbolism repeats itself. The book is a harrowing and very moving analysis of the agony and bitterness of sexual repression and incomprehension. The first chapter, *The Object*, evokes a situation in which all women must find themselves. The image of the table is used to combine allusion both to ritual sacrifice and to the hospital operating theatre, which suggests wounds, cutting up, dissection under the eyes of observers: the body (the woman) as the wounded object of gaze. Women wounded recur continuously; women seen as castrated by male eyes imagine themselves to be castrated. The real wound is in the mind. The first collage of the book shows a face of a woman with mouth and head both bandaged, the word *WANTED* printed over her mouth. The wound women have undergone is a laceration of speech and thought.

While the destiny of a woman is already written, every small girl has to learn it for herself, traumatically. Two collages ("I was a third party witness - compelled to set out on a life of crime" and "Alice entered the looking-glass and found Mummy and Daddy behind the one-way mirror. . .") tell the horrific fate of children's sexual curiosity which is fed only with images of violence and repression. As the girl grows into a woman, she puts on armour as a defence, but the armour doubles as her chains and the defence itself becomes an imprisonment. Images of rape and castration, which accompany her relationship with men, give way to images of narcissism as she seeks herself in other women. The agonizing dilemma takes shape: how can a woman transcend her love for her mother, first object of fascination and pleasure, and her desire to return to the womb? A man's path is more straightforward; he can find a replacement for his mother in an ordinary heterosexual relationship with another woman. With his penis, he can achieve a return to *inside*. A woman carries the womb *inside herself*. To fill her womb she needs a man, a moment of orgasmic death. Birth enacts two traumas: the child's first separation from its mother (the cutting of the cord) and the mother's loss of her own womb as it is ripped open: "a flesh shell cracked into a well your tongue burst open as a groin my



Valerie Wilmer: "Part of my concern with Women's Liberation has come out of the Black Liberation Movement".

I assumed that if the Victoria and Albert Museum bought a collection of a woman's work, she would be dead, almost dead, anonymous or royal – so heavy is the V & A stamp of approval. But Valerie Wilmer, whose photographs have just been purchased for the museum's permanent collection, was born in 1941, is very much alive and living in Balham.

The exhibition of her photographs, *Jazz Seen: the Face of Black Music* is just starting a two year tour of the British Isles – thanks to the discerning eye of Liz Bailey in the circulation department. It is an exhibition which appeals even to people indifferent to jazz because it goes beyond stock shots of spotlight on sweat, and explores the often grim life and experience behind the music. Valerie Wilmer's view of jazz is neither starry eyed nor star making – but it used to be:

'I spent a lot of time taking photographs which would sell, like you know, a photograph of A Person, and it's one of the easiest things in the world to photograph a musician in action.'

Until three years ago Valerie's photography was chiefly commercial. She visited six countries in Africa on various assignments (both reportage and industrial work). Then she began to look at photography for its own sake. 'Mention Eugene Smith's name,' she says, 'he's the most sensitive photographer ever for me, but nobody even knows his name, while they've all heard of Cartier Bresson. I still look at Smith's work all the time.'

Jazz seen: the Face of Black Music happened when she started to take photographs with something other than their selling potential in mind, but the impact of the pictures comes from her personal commitment to Black Music.

'I was interested in jazz from

the age of 11. My mother had two lodgers; one a girl of 17 and the other a guy of 21. I couldn't make up my mind which I was in love with! They'd listen to the radio every Sunday. I had never listened to the radio except for children's hour; when music came on I used to turn it off. Anyway, I was 11 years old and actually allowed to be in the same room as them. Mike used to say, 'jazz is the thing kid – Stan Kenton, Ted Heath.'

'Then, when I was about 12, I met this boy and he said, "yeah, trad jazz, yeah it's really good." He was about 15, and he wore a sports jacket and long trousers. He really impressed me. He liked Louis Armstrong and Humphrey Littleton, and so, of course, I did too.'

Valerie's record collection began when an assistant at the Swing Shop in Streatham started to give her 78s that had been cracked and chipped. 'I thought King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton were the guv'nors – that way I discovered Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, too.'

'I became a real fan. I used to go to concerts with my brother. We'd collect autographs at the stage door, and sometimes musicians would buy us a cup of tea or invite us backstage for a look around. That was really my first insight into working conditions for travelling musicians.'

From Sunday afternoon concerts Valerie travelled via a photography course at the Regents St. Polytechnic to eventually photographing musicians in places as diverse as New York and Mississippi. She also wrote on jazz in various publications including *Melody Maker* and *Down Beat*.

'Look, every bloody note of music you hear today comes from Black America. If you tell people that they don't like it.

Despite the crusading tone, Valerie insists that she is not photographing and writing about jazz for philanthropic reasons: 'It's only telling the truth after all. Although I'm a political person, I approach from a musical point of view. I don't believe in do-gooding and all; any change that comes anywhere has to come from self help.'

Nevertheless, she has come in for some heavy criticism. 'I was

forced to question myself every step of the way, and to ask myself why I was involved in this area? Whites would insinuate the old nigger-lover bit, and Blacks, including one particular woman in New York, would also question my position. If I was writing something she used to harrass me, and try to tear me apart by saying, 'how much profit are you getting out of that, and how much of it are you



Ruby Lee Blanche (right) watches her daughter Bobbie, combing her little girl's hair – Bentonia Mississippi 1973



Unknown Guitarist, Maxwell Street Market, Chicago

giving to the Black community?"

'It really upset me for a while. I used to spend hours walking round the New York streets thinking that maybe I should give up. Then, I thought, "Damn it, I'm doing something creative too, and what's more I'm not making any money out of it. And, let's face it, it seems that I'm the only person prepared to put up with this shit from both sides in order to write the truth about the music.

'In the end this woman and I became friendly - not fast friends, but I feel we understood each other. She taught me so much about black life and politics and about myself. And part of the impetus for my concern with Women's Liberation has come out of the Black Liberation Movement. Also, as far as many American Blacks are concerned, the Women's Movement has taken both strategy and theory from the Black Liberation Movement

Today Valerie is writing a book about the music stemming from the innovations of John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. It will include a section on the role musician's wives and other women play in the contemporary Black Music world.

'Because I am a woman, I want other people to know what the women do. To some people it may be negative to point out that their role is mainly a supportive one - but it's a fact, and nobody has ever mentioned

women in this context. Christ, the women are very much in evidence. Whenever I go to interview anyone there's always a woman around. A lot of the guys are like children - nearly every minute of the day they've got to have someone there to wipe their bottoms and so on. To be the wife of a musician can be a very sad situation to be in. The music comes first - the woman must always take a secondary role. If a man is devoted to his family, he tends to be rejected by the other musicians.

'When I put this section in the book a lot of people won't like it. The guys, if they read it carefully will understand, but a lot of them will turn off me completely for putting it there. I don't mind as it has to be said. And, anyway I've just about had it - the New York jazz scene has almost worn me out. It's the racism - seeing the really creative people unable to get work because of what amounts to a plot to stop people listening to the music.'

She sounds angry, indignant but hardly worn. Now she is planning to go back alone to Mississippi, to photograph and interview the women she met there last year while hunting gospel music and blues.

Rosie Parker

'Jazz seen: the Face of Black Music' will be at:

*Belfast, October 23- November 11
Alton, November 24- December 16
Stafford, December 29- January 20*

WOMEN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL

The distribution of women in the theatrical profession is much like that in most other industries and institutions: few and far between at the top (even actresses), clustered heavily round the middle and lower ranges of employment, pay and status. This is as true of the technical side of the theatre as it is of the 'artistic' side. The struggle for equal rights for women in the theatre hasn't as yet got off the ground in any concerted way - even within Equity, the theatrical union. It is therefore a positive prospect for the future that at the moment there is a ten-week season of 'women's theatre' running at the Almost Free theatre in Rupert Street - the theatre administered by Inter-Action, the arts community trust.

The season has historical antecedents in Jane Arden's Holocaust group, who produced a play and a film before splitting up two years ago; and the Women's Street Theatre group, a Women's Liberation agitprop group, whose *Equal Pay* play is currently being filmed by the London Women's Film Group. This season was sparked off by a casual suggestion by Ed Berman

last April to a woman who was involved with Intermedia, a radical arts/communications group. Since the idea of a women's season was passed on to women in Women's Liberation and/or in the theatre, there have been regular weekly meetings. About fifty women have been to those meetings, expressing interest and enthusiasm; of these there has been a stable core of about fifteen. There have been women who already have professional experience, as writers, actresses, directors, in stage management and women who want to explore possibilities (political and artistic) from which they have been excluded.

From the beginning Ed Berman has stated his desire to vet all scripts and to have the right of veto at dress rehearsals. In the early meetings of the group most women wanted as much control as possible of the programme. The relationship to Interaction has been a complex one which in the end has probably worked out to the advantage of both sides. The Almost Free is essentially a showcase for Inter-Action, and receives a grant from the Arts Council. Conceding the importance of this, the women's

Why have there been no great women artists?

If you want to know why, read

books and bookmen

40p from your newsagent.

group has made some concessions on their original programme - in both content and structure. The season consists of four separate lunchtime programmes (of seven plays) of scripted, rehearsed performances. The evenings (and possibly some of the afternoons) will have a more open structure; workshops of different kinds - play readings, improvisations, poetry, mime, filmshows, and exhibitions of women's work in the foyer. Despite some minor compromises, the women have retained responsibility for the programme, and are using the welcome opportunity as a starting point for women to gain experience and ideas about women and the theatre, through working with other women. There will also be a crèche, so that no women are excluded from coming if they have children.

With a large and varied group such as this, at this stage the work presented is bound to vary a great deal; some of the plays and ideas have close links with Women's Liberation, some very tenuous links. The group is only at its beginning and many ideological and political questions will be raised and discussed in the future. The exciting thing is that far from having to search for plays and other skills and enthusiasm, there has been too much to contain in the time available. Work is also in progress to organise an independent season some time in the spring, in which some of the experience gained from the *Almost Free* will be developed. Certainly some of the content presented now will be unfamiliar to many theatre-goers, but this is all to the good. Very little feminist consciousness has found its way into the theatre, and if some of the work may appear to some to be 'untheatrical' it may serve to throw into question the wider social and ideological role of West End Theatre.

The programme has some contradictions; but it is essentially a political event, planned and executed by women in response to their own subordination. The season's 'success' will be judged on what it prompts for the future.

At the time of going to press the programme hadn't been finalised; details can be obtained from the *Almost Free*, Rupert Street, London W.1. Any women wanting to know more about the Women's Theatre Group can find out by writing to Women's Theatre Group, c/o 3 Maida Avenue, Little Venice, W2 1TF.

Micheline Wandor

For the past five or six years, Linda Myles has been the driving force behind the Edinburgh Film Festival. This year, as festival director, she was determined to create an informal event rather than a sales drive. Unfortunately there was no repeat of last year's women's event but Olive Drummond and Peter Hutchison still considered it one of the most impressive festivals so far, and undertook the mammoth task of selecting films to review out of the 102 which were screened.

EDINBURGH ALLSORTS

George Qui? (British Premiere)

*Producer - Jean-Pierre Bamberger
Director and Script - Michele Rosier*

110 mins

'If one loves life one must love politics,' says Michele Rosier director of 'George Qui?' Michele Rosier's first feature film is a biography of the nineteenth century woman novelist George Sand notorious for her unconventional life style.

Not merely content with making an excellent biographical film, Michele has interspersed modern scenes with an account of George Sand's alienation from her family and contemporaries, bringing these social and political problems right into the light of today. The blurb on this film boasts, 'undoubtedly one of the most perceptive studies of the

identity problems facing woman today.' - slightly heavily put but still a fair comment.

Unfortunately 'George Qui' still lacks subtitles, and unless the viewer has a fluent understanding of French, something is bound to be lost. Someone, somewhere must soon realise the value of this film and add the necessary subtitles. Even without them 'George Qui' is worth seeing.

History of post-war Japan as told by a bar hostess

Japan

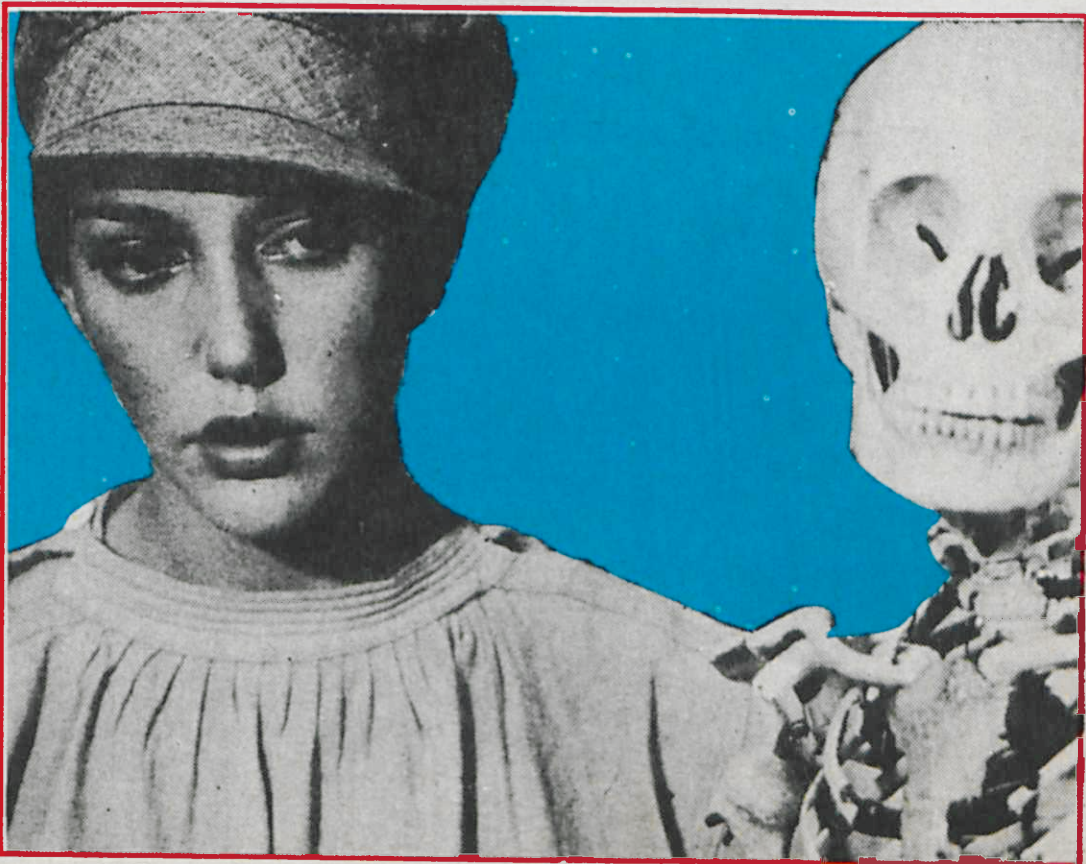
*Producer - Nickei Shinsha
Director and Script - Shoen Imamura*

105 mins

'History of Post War Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess' is one of the most important films included in 'The Japanese Event' which formed part of this year's

festival. The film is brilliant in its simplicity. A Japanese barmaid is interviewed about her experience since the war while being shown film clips of the main events affecting post-war Japan. She is unmoved by such events as the Korean War, the quashing of the general strike in Japan, and Vietnam massacres; she seems to blandly accept the fact that she married a policeman when she was 15 years old simply to give protection to her parent's black market food racketeering.

The film clips show us the march of American imperialism in Japan after the war while she fills in the background with details of the vice and corruption which has surrounded her life. It provides an uncommon insight into the role and politics of a post war Japanese woman.



George Qui?

Tunde's Film

GB

Producer - Maggie Pinhorn
Director - Maggie Pinhorn and Tunde Ikoli

Music - Pam Nestor and Joan Armatrading
50 mins

Made on a shoestring budget by a group of East End kids, 'Tunde's Film' is a highly successful social documentary on life in the East End of London for the out of work - predominantly black 16 - 18 year olds who made the film. It presents a life of harassment and boredom with a dead end quality.

'Tunde's Film' is co-directed and scripted by Tunde Ikoli and, although the storyline is sketchy, the message is outstandingly clear.

Electra Glide in Blue

USA

Director - James William Guercio
Script - Rober Boris, Michael Conrad

108 mins

James Guercio who played lead guitar with Zappa's 'Mothers'; produced 'Blood, Sweat and Tears'; and who has been one of the driving forces that brought 'Chicago' to their pinnacle of success, has now turned his

talents to film making.

'Electra Glide in Blue', Guercio's first film, will probably be deservedly as successful as his ventures in the rock field.

With a motorcycle cop as the central figure, this film does have certain affinities with 'Easy Rider', but this time the probing light is more interestingly coloured and more penetrating. 'Big John' has his share of fantasies and hang ups, and Guercio sets these out to a background of heavy rock music.

Janice

USA

Director - Joseph Strick
Screenplay - Judith Rascoe
84 mins

Although too heavy in parts, 'Janice' is a powerful, confident film which has something to say.

Basically a parable on society today, the film is about two truck drivers who pick up a prostitute called Janice (brilliantly played by Regina Baff) en route to Chicago. Janice, destroyed by a life of brutalities and non-existence, is set on self destruction, and revenge on the world that made her that way.



Janice

**Books**
Hidden from History
Sheila Rowbotham
Pluto Press £1.50

In her second book to be published within a year, Sheila Rowbotham has tackled three hundred years of women and their unwritten history. A large subject, and one self-confessedly rather sketchily filled in. Still Sheila Rowbotham is emerging as a formidable writer. Not only does she write well, lucidly and entertainingly, making what could be solid historical fact fascinating and vital, but also her books show a great wealth of research.

It's her political conviction that the development of feminism and socialism cannot be separated; she studies the history of women's oppression as a part of the working class struggle from oppression: if men are controlled as the workforce, women are controlled by men (and later as a workforce too).

She starts her argument as the agricultural world is uttering its final death throes. Presumably through lack of information about these times, the early chapters are little more than brief hypotheses. As capitalism got under way, the size of machines increased and production became centralised, women only carried on working in the food, drink and clothing industries, (hence brewster and spinster) and then on a small scale. In medicine women had traditionally worked as midwives found themselves subordinate to 'gynaecologists' and increasingly left to the world of superstition and old wives' tales, as "the new world of science meant control of ideas which gave power."

Women's role as workers faded more and more out of the collective consciousness as the rise of capitalism led to the fight for material wealth and status symbols. By the seventeenth century it became quite acceptable for a man to support his wife on his one wage; this remained the only view of women until well into the nineteenth century.

With this economic control came increased sexual control. If you are to be kept within the house as wife, mother, status symbol and possession, then it's no good encouraging women to have sex outside marriage, or to believe that they can fruitfully be single and at work, or single and a mother. "For generations," writes Sheila, "women have been discouraged in any independent thought or action in sexual matters; they have systematically been stultified, kept

ignorant and dependent." The book does not go beyond the 1930's as this would need far more time and space. Her sections on the union movements in the 30's show that things have changed little: women's dependence on capitalism for their independence; their inability to get to as many union meetings as they would like because of responsibility to children; their lack of militant awareness because of a husband's contempt; and their willing acceptance of lower pay as somehow right and 'natural'.

Women's place in the family is closely related to control over her body. Sheila traces steps towards abortion, birth control and freedom within marriage, especially among the various free thinking groups like the Saint-Simonians, and Owenites and in the ideas prevalent during the French Revolution, though she adds "Sexual freedom, in fact, tended to be for men only, so long as there was no effective birth control."

Sheila's train of thought is kept simple in what is a very short book with short chapters that cover topics rather than follow the various movements chronologically. The trouble is it doesn't always ring true. I have decided, finally, what it is, I think, that makes her writing so readable. She is prepared to go in for slap-bang generalisations and not be frightened by the consequences. It does mean though that occasionally her arguments slip. Many of them that crop up early in the book, Sheila herself criticises: that women's dependence on capitalism, for a way out of their predicament leads to terrible ambiguities. "The feminist attack on men's continued possession of women did not necessarily imply a rejection of private ownership of capital or of the wage system. On the contrary women could well ask for admission into that system on terms of equality." At times Sheila confuses 'men' and 'capitalists' - which is worse?

One of the most important things to come out of this book is the personality of some of those unheard of, let alone unsung, heroes. Like Anna Wheeler, an Irish protestant, radical and feminist; or Hannah Mitchell; or Janet Chase, Stella Browne or Rose Witcop - all names virtually unknown to the general public. As Sheila Rowbotham says in her preface, it may only serve to spur others on to fill in more gaps, and at best it can act as a basis for discussion in the women's movement, so much of which takes place in a historical vacuum.

Carol Dix
Badger

Twenty poems by Margaret de V. Wills. published by Bristol Womens Liberation. 40p post free.

Writing poetry for years and never published before, Margaret tells in these poems of the conflict between passionate involvement with marriage, children ('my four daughters and two sons') parents, Spain and Roman Catholicism, and her longings to escape from them. In the title poem, 'the badger' she writes of trailing her insides, two miles through woods to find her young. . . even after she has been

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mortally maimed.

Margaret asks why, if she herself is so inextricably bound into the weave of the family she has created, cannot she be, without question, that mother and wife she is supposed to be. Unlike the badger, she questions whether to go on and wonders

'is there some ganglion. . .
unfailingly connected in a lion
a swan - in us left loose -'

Women have been told and have believed motherhood comes from such animal response to nature. We question that now, we still do not have the answers but poetry from a woman who has lived from cinderella to menopause within the family structure tells of the pain and love involved; and clarifies and indicts the claustrophobia, isolation and fallacy surrounding the monogamous marriage myth.

Neither does she see that anyone escapes. Writing of her widowed mother:

'in the street where I grew
they plant no new flowers
each spring fresh crops
of widows cut the grass'

the death of her father, the memory of the death of her baby son, the near death of her eldest daughter are the poems that have emotional life, total response to the experience. The other poems are cooler, taut with the tenacity necessary to get a lifeless self through the day to day ennui and difficulty. She is a woman who loves and she is a woman who feels she has lost sight of herself under the burden of the love she is required to feel.

A vision of womanlife comes to her when she watches the flamenco dancing of Spanish women. Astarte, in green shawl seems like that self she knows is in her, in all women. Her puritan Derbyshire nature has been seduced by Spain; it is as necessary to her as it is difficult for her to accept. She herself says of her relationship to Spain 'it is a love affair I disapprove of'. And throughout, the impossible but nevertheless enduring relationship with her half-Spanish husband that defines and sustains her whilst it destroys:

'For years we kept It live and well
on Compromise, Concession,
Repression
in little bottles on the bathroom
shelf.'

nevertheless:

'In spite of everything. . .
. . . I want, often,
our hands to touch in trust
between the sheets
and the betrayals and
our truths briefly to meet
as we lick each other's wounds
and brew tea and coffee for each other
as we say
goodbye for ever for the hundredth
time . . .

I want where
our wrinkles are no matter.'

After years of attempted belief as a Roman Catholic convert she has come to the point where she realises it is oneself and oneself only who gets through experience; one stands or falls on one's own strengths.

By her dying father's bedside she observes the ineffectual parson who can do nothing to alleviate suffering:

'Meanwhile, if I could offer you a cup of prayer?'

by her son's grave she challenges the remote Mary:

'-telling the Virgin
what she could do
with her jewelled cloak -
wrap you up warm in it
or else. . .'

in a bitter poem attacking all formalised religion for its inadequacy towards women she writes:

'Poor Mary, you were taken in
by sweet talk and a Triple Djinn'. .
so, there is nothing to do but continue:
. . . 'slowly I pull on boots,
survey the day's terrain'

Perhaps, after all, Margaret is Badger.

This superb poetry shouldn't be missed by anyone interested in feminine consciousness.

Pat Van Twest

BADGER may be ordered from
Womens Books
Bristol womens centre
11, Waverley Road
Bristol 6
38120 or 34058

Watership Down Richard Adams Puffin 40p

This book has won this year's Guardian Award and Carnegie Medal for children's fiction; it's very long (478 pp) and is the epic of a small band of rabbits who leave their warren when danger is sensed. The book tells of the adventures and sufferings they endure in finding a suitable place for a new warren, and then the battles they fight to find does to keep the warren going (because they are all male and that goes for most of the book). Does are for digging warrens and breeding - the author points out that it's only humans who have devised notions of romantic love and protection.

Led by Hazel, their Chief Rabbit (don't be misled, Hazel is male - the rabbits are mostly named after flowers

and fruits) they plot and scheme their way into the dreaded Efrafa, a warren ruled by a martial tyrant of a rabbit, who is the epitome of the totalitarian dictator. There they make contact with several discontented does who have already, unsuccessfully, petitioned the General to be allowed to leave his badly overcrowded warren. These does have character, courage and minds of their own, and prove it by making a dangerous, yet successful, escape, led by one of the 'free' bucks, of course. Hazel's warren is run on commune-like lines, with everyone taking responsibility for decisions, speaking their minds etc. The story is interspersed with rivetting tales of rabbit lore and mythology, some very funny, some scary and lots of interesting information about real

rabbits; obviously the rabbits in the story have a number of human attributes, yet the balance between these characters and the real thing is well-maintained: it is annoying that they can change some of their natural characteristics, (fighting other animals like cats and dogs, digging their own burrows usually done by the does) and yet so many of the male attitudes of human society remain. The language is easy, in spite of the wild flower names and 'Lapine' words, which are clearly explained and used sparingly. I can see why it has caused such a storm; some of it is really exciting, two-in-the-morning stuff, informative and imaginative. I recommend it, but it is too male-dominated to be recommended without reservations.

Sue Turner

Woman As Sex Object Studies in erotic art, 1730 - 1970 Edited by Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin Allen Lane £5.00

If you want to know anything about woman as sex object in art from 1730 to 1970, you'd be better off after ten minutes with any of John Berger's presentations than after three hours with the volume in question. Berger says more in a few pages of *Ways of Seeing* than does 'Woman as Sex object' for all its bulk, glossy photographs and footnoted art-historical allusion.

Erotic images are painted by men for men. Of the twelve essays in the book, only Linda Nochlin's introduction deals with the idea that sexual imagery is one-sided. She proves her point with an inspired juxtaposition of two photographs: a nineteenth century nude presenting breasts and apples, a

photograph she took of a male nude showing us prick amid bananas.

Nochlin's essay apart, the essays (half are by women) appear to have been collated for a leap at the bandwagon. The viewpoint in most of the essays is not feminist, but high - cultural/art - historical/academic. A scholarly elaboration and substantiation of Berger's arguments might be welcomed (if only to wake up other art historians and sleepy academics who won't listen to another kind of language), but this book doesn't succeed. Its not much good to be told at some length that Renoir is a male chauvinist pig; one wants to see *how*. A serious study of woman as sex object might centre on the idea that these paintings are made for and by men, and that there is an accompanying distortion of female sexuality. "To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A nude body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object." (Berger) If you already know



A mass-audience, 'low' version of the breasts-as-apples metaphor: Buy Some Apples, from a late 19th century popular French magazine.



what you are after, then the illustrations have some merit; it might be of use in an argument to say that so-and-so painted tits-and-ass in a certain way in a certain decade. But Berger again wins out, as his illustrations are more carefully chosen and you don't have pointedly to ignore the text.

As there is no focal point to the studies other than the female body, the material varies from the mildly interesting to the irrelevant to the grossly obnoxious. There is a lengthy discussion of two centuries of fashions in corsets; half-hearted cataloging of images of the female in Renoir, Picasso, Ingres; studies of the themes of the 'femme fatale', the pin-up and a curious legend called Caritas Romana, where a daughter suckles her father to keep him from starvation; correlation of Courbet's bathers and Manet's Olympia with contemporary erotic prints and photographs. We are told that Olympia's angularity is seductive, and the Ingres' Bain Turc, "... is the master piece of a lifetime search to create an allegory of the senses wherein the spectator is the living personification of sight." To that sort of thing, one can only say Oh, God; and for the rest, so what?

Pat Kahn

Elizabeth Alone William Trevor Bodley Head

Elizabeth Aidallbery, aged 41, is about to enter hospital for a hysterectomy. She is recently divorced, having discovered sexual pleasure after 19 years

of pretence in marriage. Her lover has returned to his wife, her children are growing up. Feeling guilty and useless, she looks back on a past 'full of other people' - a middle-aged woman with romance 20 years behind her and nothing ahead.

There are three other women in Elizabeth's ward. Their lives too revolve around other people - boyfriends, husbands, lovers, children. Even Miss Samson, hideously disfigured by a birthmark, has had to organise her life around the fact that she is repulsive to men. Outside the hospital, founded by a 19th century feminist, a woman parades with a banner *Liberation Now!* It's assumed that women's liberation is meant because of her sex and location. Patients are given the memoirs of the hospital's founder to read; occasional quotes form an ironic comment on the action. 'I am angered sometimes, she read, by the exploitation of women, not in the factories, of which we nowadays hear much, but in the homes which they themselves have helped to make. And I am angered by women's folly in encouraging that exploitation and by accepting without protest the status of mindless creatures.'

During the novel Elizabeth is gradually stripped of all female trappings, of which the womb is really the least important. William Trevor dissects the process with his usual skill and sensitivity. He sees clearly the problems of women as women; but their real problem is being human. Their men are even more hopeless, lonely, inefficient, dependent, than

they. Men and women alike are terrified of being alone and this fear drives them together, into marriage. Only their myths to disguise this truth differ - the male stupidity of pornography, the female one of romance. The liberation banner is necessarily non-specific.

At the end of the book Elizabeth tells her daughter that she is happy enough alone. In Trevor's bleak world we cannot but wonder is this liberation or merely escape? 'It's easier not to love people, Elizabeth. It's easier not to love at all.'

Lesley Thornton

Women in Music

Marion Fudger
Part two.

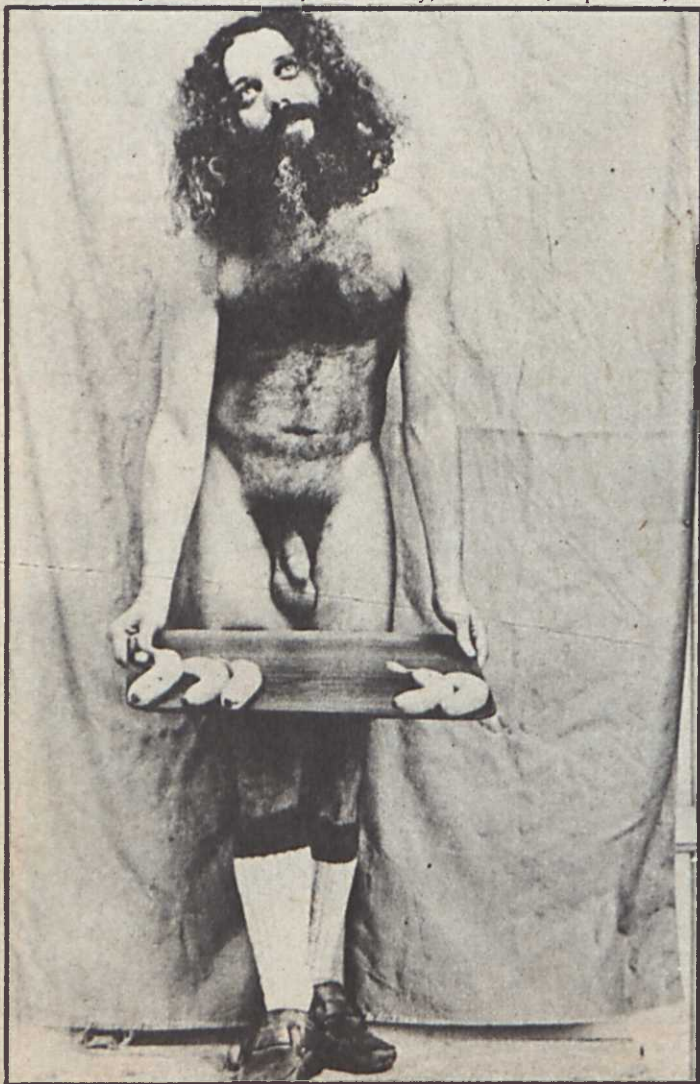
A rock writer's basic enthusiasm stems from a desire to be involved in the music world. As that world, and hence the industry, is predominantly male, the music press remains within the same carefully guarded territory where competition is rife and women are grateful if they can find a niche. Two women talk from different positions: Marilyne is secretary to the editor of Melody Maker, and Penny, having been a music journalist for twelve years, has recently joined a record company.

Penny Valentine

I didn't know what to do when I left school, I'd wanted to be an actress, but that was more a fantasy. Anyway my mother being middle class and secure, decided I should do a secretarial course (because whatever happened I could always fall back on that). So I went off to the Regent St. Polytechnic, and saw in their prospectus that they did a journalist course and as I'd always enjoyed writing at school, I decided to do that. It was like being in the 6th form at school, they continued English history, literature, British Constitution, and when they did shorthand typing every afternoon, I used to skip off to the cinema which was my other great love. There were about twenty five students, five were women, six were English guys and the rest were foreign students over here on a government grant to learn journalism. That lasted a year, and the best thing about it was that at the end of that time they had contacts with local papers who would take whoever they were most interested in from the course. Whereas now you have to go through three years training as a junior reporter and take exams all the time. Remember this was a long time ago. I got a job on a local paper

in Ruislip slogging around caravan sites in wellington boots, twelve hours a day, six days a week for £2.10s.0d. I was seventeen and I stayed for two years, it was really hard work but obviously very good for me to be thrown in at the deep end.

It was money, an offer of £9.00 per week which made me move on to Boyfriend magazine as feature writer. It was one of the earliest teenybop comic strip romance things. I used to interview John Leyton, Eden Kane, all the stars of yesterday. The publisher - one of the News of the World subsidiaries - had about five publications, it was slave labour, we had to do one interview then rewrite it for each publication. I enjoyed it to start



What happens when traditional erotic symbols change sex? Buy *Some Bananas*. 1972, photograph by Linda Nochlin.

with, after all it was at the time of the beginning of the whole rock and roll thing which was very exciting, but I became cynical after a while. It didn't help having to work for something called Caravan Weekly at the same time, which meant I had to keep on going out interviewing caravan site owners.

So I left at 21 and went to work for Disc. In those days people on papers used to stay in jobs a long time, there wasn't the opportunity that there is now, and I stayed for 6 years. The way I got the job was that a friend of mine knew the editor and they had previously had a woman in the job, one of the few around at that time, so I was able to get in. On the whole, jobs are mainly got through friends in the music publishing world. When I changed my job from Disc to Sounds, I was terribly worried about my writing style, I thought, here are all these guys thinking I can only write teenybop stuff because I'd worked on a teenybop paper for so long. I was forcing it and stop-starting all the time, it was only after I relaxed and felt more secure that it got better. I'd joined as a feature writer, and the guys there didn't want me, there were no other women there, and they just didn't like the idea. After a while, I got my first ever promotion, the features editor left, and there were two other guys and I who might have got the job. I was older and had been writing longer but it was the biggest surprise of my life when I got it, mainly because when there's an office full of guys, you just know that the chances of getting the job are pretty remote. It didn't go down very well with the others to start with, but after a while it worked very well. I felt quite sorry for them really, the balance seemed to shift, and instead of the woman getting the bad deal, it was the man. I tended to get away with murder in terms of arguing with management and so forth. After three years, I started feeling restless, I'd been in the same business for twelve years and I was interviewing the same people over and over again. I felt that if I was doing that and copping out of interviewing any of the new bands, I just hadn't got the enthusiasm and it wasn't fair to myself or the paper. Sometimes when I regret having left, I see its only the ego thing, it's a very parasitic existence, most of the music journalists are frustrated super stars or at least frustrated musicians, and I never wanted to be either really. I have

a lot of sympathy for artists, I used to talk to them a lot about their lives and the things they had to do, I don't think a lot of them know what they're letting themselves in for.

I haven't really had many problems interviewing men, possibly because there were so few women in the music press, that I became quite well known and through being in the business a long time I earned a certain amount of respect. It became difficult at one time, when a lot of women got into it in the States, for more than journalistic reasons, and the American bands would come over and think I was another groupie. But once I knew what they were thinking, I'd stop, lay it on the line, and continue on a business basis. I usually try to hit it off on a personal level though, as I would if I were interviewing a woman.

At the time when I became features editor of Sounds, the whole structure in the music press changed, nearly all the other papers suddenly took on female feature editors, I was delighted. Their attitude was more that it just never occurred to them that they should take on women in any position of responsibility, 'women aren't responsible people'. The bias against women is becoming less, and there's more women coming into it as a result, which is encouraging. Women are judged more now on the basis of 'if they can write then fine, why not have them on the staff'. But I don't see a balance of even fifty/fifty for a very long time.

Within the industry as a whole, the majority of women are married to people in the same business, sometimes even on the same paper or in the same record company, I can't fathom it out, I wonder if they would stay in the business if their husbands left. I'd like to think so.

This is a very small record company I'm in now, there's more involvement and less chance of losing ones identity in a small organisation. I'm the press officer but it's difficult because it's the opposite to what I'm used to doing. I used to fight off press officers who were trying to get editorial space for their groups. I want to become more involved on the creative side, as opposed to the business side, really get to know the artists as people not product; it will be a challenge too because as yet, women haven't managed to infiltrate the artists and repertoire side of record companies. The business and money side of the industry stinks, but then big money

anywhere in any business stinks, and you'll get personal and financial corruption no matter what the product is.



Marilyne Welch

I've always been interested in music, I come from a whole family of musicians, but I didn't set out to become involved in the music business, in fact I didn't know what I wanted to do. I went to secretarial college at 16, and then worked for several industrial firms, one of which promoted me to working for three men, filling up a shorthand notebook every day and never finding time to type it all out, the money was terrible too. So I moved to the personnel dept of IPC's business section and when the vacancy in Melody Maker arrived on my desk, I transferred immediately. That was three years ago. For the first 2½ years I was the only female on the editorial side, the editor had to fight tooth and nail to bring in an assistant for me. Just before we were allowed to take on someone else I nearly had a breakdown - there was so much work to do. That's the crazy thing about a huge company empire, even though we're big business for IPC, the money they make on us is ploughed back into their other publications which are tottering and they keep us understaffed. The rest of their trade papers are even worse off staffwise. The money isn't too bad, I'm a member of NATSOPA so at least I get union rates with a rise once or twice a year.

The full time editorial staff here and on all music press is ninety nine per cent male, we have women freelance writers covering provincial events and there's a woman in charge of editorial for us in New York and she's brilliant. Woman rock critics seem to have it sewn up in America, they're so good, they can dictate their own terms and work when and for who they like. But the ones who make it have really strong characters, it's no wonder really, considering how hard and cruel the business is, especially in America. In England there seem to be very few women specialists who can

write authoritatively on music and who are prepared to push themselves and compete for the relatively few jobs available. The majority of women don't become so involved in the different aspects of music. No-one is encouraged, men or women, and the market for rock critics is flooded. We've got nearly 2,000 freelance writers on our books, sending in material and phoning up, it's a hard life being turned down time after time and still wanting to keep on trying. I'd quite like to write, but I haven't got the necessary drive and confidence, and the market for secretaries is far from flooded, besides I enjoy what I do. It's more than just secretarial work, for instance, we have weekly conferences and I make suggestions and I think my opinions are valued. We're thinking of having a conference for women in rock music, getting them all together to talk to each other, which will be really interesting. So it's certainly not a rut, there's always lots to do, I feel I can be more myself here, the atmosphere is different and more free than in any other job I've had and I've had hundreds. Chris, my husband, is the features editor here, but there's no problems about working together, we're not in the same office. But it took a year before I was accepted by the men even though I was no threat here, as far as their jobs were concerned. It was when I started seeing Chris that things got easier, and now because we're married, I get treated like one of the lads.

I couldn't work on the hard, cut throat business side, I enjoy being on the creative end, I like musicians, they're fascinating people and living with a reporter means that our social and business life are one, we only have one day - Sunday - to ourselves but that's the way we like it, and something very important will have to come along before I change things■



LI SHUANGSHUANG

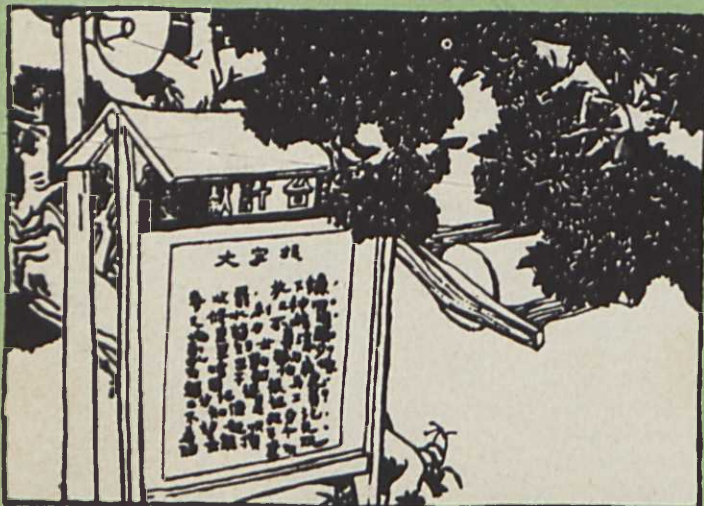
A look at the liberation of women as part of communal life in China - the story so far: Shuangshuang and her husband Xiwang have an argument about their responsibility to the community. He goes off in a huff. You Fang and Gui Ying come to talk to Shuangshuang about her row with Xiwang. They discuss why none of the women go out to work.



30. Shuangshuang slapped her thigh. "Ha, didn't the Party secretary say the other day that everybody should express their opinions? Let's bring this out and write a big-character poster!" When You Fang's wife and Gui Ying heard the idea of putting up a big-character poster, they began to hesitate; one said she couldn't write characters and the other said she feared a scolding from her grandfather.



31. Shuangshuang boldly said, "I'll write it. This matter is too important to be passed over!" And You Fang's wife added, "That's for sure. As soon as work points* are issued according to the work done, whoever is free will want to go and win some points." They all smiled.



32. Two days later, early in the morning in the most striking position in the village street, a big-character poster appeared. Although the characters were not written too well, the content was fresh and lively and it instantly aroused everybody's interest:

Big-character Poster

The harvest is over and the sickles have been put away; now the irrigation works are being repaired and the fields are being planted. There isn't enough labor to go around, but the women stay at home with nothing to do. Why is there a shortage of people going out to join the labor force? It's all because the cadres are lazy so the work points are recorded slackly. Don't you know who is the work-point recorder? I hope he will hurry up and start recording work points. The women can work half the day.

Li Shuangshuang

*Work points are a system agreed on at village meetings used to calculate wages in relation to work done.



33. Just at this moment Secretary Liu of the commune committee, the Party secretary, and You Fang were passing by. When Secretary Liu had read the big-character poster, he said to You Fang, "An excellent criticism! This is an important problem in your team. I think you should do some research into it straightaway."



34. Secretary Liu then asked, "Li Shuangshuang . . . whose wife is that?" The former secretary You Fang was not too certain but thought it was the wife of Xiwang. They asked around and someone explained that it was Xiwang's wife and that Li Shuangshuang was the new name she had chosen for herself when she had gone to the people's school the previous year.



35. While they were discussing this, Xiwang arrived on his way back from the work site, pushing a wheelbarrow. When everyone saw him they shouted, "Xiwang, come over here! Was this big-character poster written by your old woman or not?"



36. Xiwang got quite a fright as he thought to himself, "Let's hope it's not the business of my argument which has come out!" He was in something of a panic as he read the big-character poster, humphing all the while, and it was only when he had read it through that he felt relieved.



37. Secretary Liu said to the branch secretary, "This big-character poster is well written." Turning around, Xiwang said with a smile, "Uncle Progressive, the poster was written by the woman in my house."



38. No sooner had he said this than they all burst out laughing. Xiwang thought they were laughing at him because they thought he was boasting, so he quickly tried to explain. "What? Really it was she who wrote it! That one that cooks for me can write. Not only does she write big-character posters but she also writes lots of little-character posters in the house!"

More next month.

Punchin' Judy



.....plays below the belt.

Flame-haired Barbara O'Meara grips the microphone in her right fist, her left placed firmly on her hip, and delivers her songs with all the ferocity of an Amazonian boxer. Behind stand John, Keith & Alan, three aggressive young musicians who take out their feelings in the music.

Hard rock that catches you below the belt.

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